

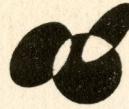
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FOR JUNE

1932

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PERFECTION in anything, it is reasonably safe to assume, is seldom achieved in this world, but there are many record collectors who apparently prefer to believe otherwise. Whenever the phonograph companies offer fresh evidence of their also being fallible, these collectors invariably are profoundly grieved and profess to be vastly astonished. Content in other things to accept compromises with perfection gracefully, they shake with righteous indignation when any of the companies reveal indications of human error. Let one of the manufacturers make a blunder, and instantly there is a heart-breaking cry of distress from all over the country. Let another blunder be made, and before it is actually completed the great discovery is made that the companies are no longer interested in records and in fact would like to see the record industry die out altogether (thereby rendering useless and consequently taking a heavy loss on much costly equipment for pressing and manufacturing records). Last Fall, when the long-playing records were introduced, many collectors were not content with pointing out that the new process was not perfect and that many serious flaws would have to be corrected before it could possibly hope to attract discriminat-

ing users of standard records. Dark rumors began circulating that the end of the phonograph industry was just around the corner and, worse, that its sad ending had been deliberately and cunningly planned by the leading manufacturers. What could be more silly and childish? One could more warmly sympathize with this strange point of view if an attempt had been made to replace the standard records with the long-playing records. But no such attempt was made or even, so far as we are aware, contemplated. No one was compelled to resort to the long-playing records for his phonograph music. The lists of standard records were issued each month as usual, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue to be issued for many years to come. And now that the long-playing process has been somewhat improved and many of the flaws at first discernible in it eliminated, one seldom hears any praise for the manufacturers. If the long-playing records should finally be perfected, it will be in spite of the record-buying public, not because of it.

These collectors also like to point with considerable pride at the phonograph companies of ten years ago, comparing them with the modern companies, and not, it need scarcely

be added, in a very flattering manner for the latter. It was not thus in the old days, they are fond of reminding us. Years ago, during the acoustical era when the best the phonograph had to offer was some operatic aria loudly yauped by a much praised tenor, the companies showed far more enterprise, far more consideration for the record-buying public, far more interest, far more business sense. Well, it may be so, but when one compares a record catalogue of 1922, say, with one issued during the past couple of years, it is quite impossible to waste many tears over the passing of the old order. Regardless of the fact that the record industry, like many another industry these days, is not in a very flourishing condition, there is surely little doubt but that what is available on records today is immeasurably superior to what was available yesterday; indeed, the difference is so great that there is scarcely room for any just comparison at all. If the worth of the companies is to be measured by sheer quantity, by their size, efficient organization and business policies, then perhaps the old days were the best; but if the quality of their output is considered the standard by which the companies are to be measured, then there can be little doubt but that the industry is miles ahead of 1922.

But not only is the quality of records much better today than it was ten years ago; the quality of those who purchase them is infinitely superior. One can readily concede that there were more collectors in 1922, that there were more dealers, that perhaps more records were sold. But where in the old catalogues could one hope to find such a rich variety of fine music as is now included in the current catalogues? Where could one find complete recordings of all the Brahms symphonies, the first and second symphonies of Sibelius, Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder*, Strawinski's *Le Sacre du Printemps*, a fairly complete recording of *Tristan*, the B Minor Mass, the . . . ? But why continue? No one needs to be told that modern record catalogues are richly stored with fine recordings, nor is it news that in 1922 there was little or nothing in the phonograph to interest a music lover—not unless his musical taste was thoroughly satisfied by highly paid opera singers rendering hackneyed and excessively familiar operatic arias, the musical value of which was as often as not scarcely very impressive.



What has happened is plain enough and hardly needs pointing out. The public that so enthusiastically supported the phonograph in 1922 has now joined that vast army of restless people who nightly sit entranced in front of the radio, not looking for anything in particular but joyously accepting whatever happens to come over the air, swallowing with equal pleasure a jazz band, a slice of a Beethoven symphony, a rousing sales harangue, or an illiterate speech by some politician. With a few exceptions here and there, the vast majority of the people who buy records today scarcely knew of the existence of the phonograph ten years ago. Then they considered it—and with abundant reason—little more than a rather noisy and objectionable toy. What has attracted them to the machine is simply that it now offers entertainment and instruction that often cannot be duplicated elsewhere or that can be enjoyed much more conveniently and comfortably at home. When one can listen to a great variety of good music plausibly reproduced at home, there is not much of an inducement to go out to a concert or a recital—not, that is, if it is the music alone that interests one and not the personality of

the performing artist or the spectacle of several thousand people (most of them striving heroically to look pleased and interested) gathered together. One often hears the complaints of people who have attempted the experiment of giving public phonograph recitals. Nearly always they prove to be dismal flops. And no wonder. The only place where such an event would be at all attractive would be in a small town where, if one hasn't a record library, there is little chance of hearing any music at all. In such places there is ample room for phonograph recitals. But to attempt to give them in large cities, where there is nearly always plenty of good music to be heard, seems rather ill-advised, to say the least. In the city there is no discernible reason for such recitals. One of the salient charms of the phonograph is that it enables you to hear music alone or with a few close friends. At a public phonograph recital all the disadvantages of concert-going are present, and none of the advantages. If one plans to venture into the discomforts of concert-going, it is much more sensible to go to hear the real thing and not to a program of records that could be heard just as easily and far more comfortably at home.



The criticism that has recently been directed toward the companies is not something new; it is not a late development. We have always—and rightly—had it with us. One was aware of it even several years ago, when the electrical process had just been introduced and the record business was in a very lively and flourishing state. Only it was much less noticeable then than it is now. People were much too absorbed in the task of collecting records to find time to find fault; fewer good records were available then, so that the monthly supplements were more exciting. But as the depression gradually settled upon us and it became evident that optimism and breadlines alone were not very effective remedies for it, the complaints became increasingly louder and more violent. As record supplements grew thinner, protests became more vigorous, though now and then one can't help from suspecting that the loud demands for some company to record this or that composition are largely so much sound and fury, signifying nothing. We are all much too familiar with the spectacle of a set that had long been loudly clamored for resting peacefully on the dealers' shelves, while those who had asked for it the most vociferously become significantly calm upon its release and hastily shift their attention to some other unrecorded composition.

The depression included the phonograph industry in its devastating sweep, too. But the depression alone is not solely responsible for the difficulties and storms through which the phonograph companies and dealers have floundered more or less helplessly the past couple of years. It should be obvious that a change was bound to occur sooner or later. Even before the radio reached its present state of fine reception, the phonograph lost a vast army of supporters, most of whom, as has already been hinted, were customers of only the least attractive of the records that were issued. The loss of this army was surely no negligible one, for it was its support that made the phonograph business so highly prosperous, and it was its tastes and desires that the companies tried the hardest to satisfy. The increasing group of music lovers who began to buy records—the better and more expensive records—helped out, of course, but it was not sufficiently large to make up for the other and less cultivated but infinitely larger group that now is busily

engaged twisting the dials. The change in the tastes of record buyers is admirably reflected in the supplements that have been issued since electrical recording was introduced. These supplements are surely not beyond criticism, but no one can examine them carefully without realizing at once that the policies of those who select recording material have been greatly altered, and undeniably for the better. It is doubtful if the phonograph will ever regain the widespread popularity that it enjoyed when—outside of the player piano—it was the only reproducing machine that was available to the masses. But it is certain that there will always be a place for the phonograph, and that place is constantly acquiring more dignity and value. It is equally certain that it will be a much less conspicuous place. Like all dignified and worthy things, it will as now be used by relatively few people—unless music lovers should suddenly become far more numerous than they are at present, and that hardly seems very likely. In view of all this, then, it is not at all amazing that the phonograph industry is no longer the thriving business it used to be; the amazing thing, rather, is that collectors, and maybe dealers and manufacturers, too, should expect it to be.



All of the foregoing is surely not intended for a complete whitewashing of the manufacturers, nor is to be implied that we are against criticism of the companies. Criticism, indeed, should be heartily encouraged, and for reasons that are sufficiently obvious. The companies are frequently guilty of some thumping mistakes—some of them so incredible, indeed, that one sometimes wonders how the companies have managed to keep going this long,—and a lively spirit of criticism and skepticism among collectors is a healthy sign. But there is so much of this criticism that is worthless and unfair and shows such a lack of understanding of the problems with which the manufacturers are wrestling that it seems time to make some sort of a protest against it. And all the more so because when the companies reject this criticism a great deal of bad feeling results, so that today we have with us many misguided collectors who are nursing injured feelings and who sincerely believe that the industry is diabolically conspiring to make life disagreeable for them. They modestly demand that records be made perfect, cheaper and incapable of injury. They charge that record prices are too high, and offer no convincing evidence that they could be lowered. Everyone would naturally like to see the prices of records come down, but only the manufacturers can possibly know whether or not it could be done satisfactorily. If at the present price level the industry is not prospering, would a general lowering of prices induce collectors to buy more records and bring in enough new customers to make up for the difference? No one knows, of course, but the indications hardly point that way. And it is always much easier to lower prices than to increase them. Suppose such an experiment were given a trial. If it should then turn out to be a failure, making a return to the old price scale necessary, it doesn't require much imagination to guess what sort of an uproar would follow.

In justice to these collectors, however, it should be pointed out that none of them has yet demanded that the manufacturers produce a three-sided record.



Following the Skryabin and Carpenter records issued last month, RCA Victor

now announces the release of a complete recording of Schönberg's cantata, *Gurre-Lieder*. This is surely the most ambitious task ever undertaken by an American phonograph company; indeed, it may not be too sweeping to include Europe also and say that it is the greatest achievement in the history of recorded music. One is always somewhat impressed by the spectacle of a complete opera or long choral work in recorded form, but to find the whole of Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder* on records rather staggers the imagination, especially when they appear just as many were gloomily preparing to shed tears over the premature passing of the phonograph industry. Schönberg has never before been adequately represented on records. Indeed, save for an acoustical recording, now withdrawn, of the *Verklärte Nacht* and several Bach chorales which he arranged for orchestra, nothing whatever of his has been recorded. The complete *Gurre-Lieder*, then, makes a particularly impressive and appropriate phonographic débüt for this distinguished modern composer, who has for so long been unaccountably neglected by the recording companies.

Like the Skryabin and Carpenter records last month, the *Gurre-Lieder* set arrived too late to receive adequate treatment in this issue, so that readers will have to wait until next month, when Mr. Joseph Cottler will devote an article to the composition and the records. *Gurre-Lieder* was recorded during the actual performances of it a month or so ago by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski at the Metropolitan Opera House in Philadelphia. An additional performance was later given in New York. These performances were the first in America of this great work, and in consequence they aroused much comment; both critical and popular opinion tended to be extremely favorable as regards the composition and the performance. In addition to the augmented Philadelphia Orchestra, there are also three four-part male choruses, one eight-part mixed chorus and six vocal soloists. The men's choruses are the Princeton Glee Club, the Fortnightly Club and the Mendelssohn Club; the vocalists are Paul Althouse (tenor), Jeannette Vreeland (soprano), Rose Bampton (contralto), Abrasha Robofsky

[Continued on page 166]

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, CH-Christschall, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotipia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

Black Beauty

By R. D. DARRELL

"Nothing is lost that's wrought with tears," said Blake; and since every personal revelation of life through art, so long as it is authentic and communicative, is infinitely precious, there can be no question of the value of such disclosure of temperament and experience . . . —*Lawrence Gilman*.

Gilman's words were applied by him to Loeffler, but they are no less applicable to others who write directly from the heart and sensibilities, and whose works—a small but golden core of the musical repertory—strike home to us with an intensity of feeling, an evocative magic, that is more intimately moving than the great dramatic, passionate, fantastic utterances of music's *Uebermenschen*.



In the last century music has immeasurably enlarged its scope and enriched its texture, but there has been an increasing preoccupation with sheer rhetoric and gaudy sound splashes, the vehemence of whose statement disguises their essential incoherence and unassimilation of true feeling. Decadence sets in with its emphasis on detail at the expense of the whole. The tendency to *schrecklichkeit*, the striving for greater dynamic extremes, is not yet curbed. The urge to originality defeats itself, forcing into the background organic principles: economy of means, satisfying proportion of detail, and the sense of inevitability—of anticipation and *revelatory* fulfillment—that are the decisive qualifications of musical forms.

The "personal revelation," the "authentic and communicative" grow even rarer than the mighty dramatic peaks. The always small audience for personal revelation grows still scantier, and where some hear it in the latter works of Stravinski, others hear

only barrenness. The Teutonically romantic-minded find an experience in Bruckner and Mahler that is shoddy and over-blown to those who find their rarest musical revelation in the pure serenity and under-statement of Delius. One searches far afield, and having found, discovers the fruit to be sweet to oneself alone, an experience that cannot be shared, scarcely comprehended by others.

So when I upturn treasure in what others consider the very muck of music, I cannot be surprised or disappointed if my neighbor sees only mud where I see gold, ludicrous eccentricity where I find an expressive expansion of the tonal palette, tawdry tunes instead of deep song, "nigger music" instead of "black beauty."

II

The way was paved for me by a few of the early "blues," before the blues singers made money and acquired sophistication. The artless, tender singing of Lena Wilson in *I Need You to Drive My Blues Away* and *I'm a Good Gal but I'm a Long Ways from Home* struck me as the unworked stuff of pure folk music.

I had a glimpse of how such material might be worked by a musician who had the mind as well as the heart, the skilled hand as well as the natural voice,—a musician who would compose as tenderly as Lena Wilson sang, as simply and richly as Paul Robeson, as intensely as Roland Hayes. But Lena Wilson came of age with the rest of the blues singers and toyed as slyly with delicate obscenity; Robeson and Hayes brought to flower their matchless interpretative technique: the creative spirit was lacking.



ingly expressive. The piece took on a surprising individuality and entity as well as an intensity of feeling that was totally incongruous in popular dance music. Beneath all its oddity and perverseness there was a twisted beauty that grew on me more and more and could not be shaken off.

A work like this was alien to all my notions of jazz. It had nothing of the sprightly gusto of Gershwin or Kern, nothing of the polite polish of the Whiteman school, nothing of the raucous exuberance of the Negro jazz I had known. Nor was it in the heavily worked "spiritual" tradition, except in that it sounded an equal depth of poignance. For all its fluidity and rhapsodic freedom it was no improvisation, tossed off by a group of talented virtuosi who would never be able to play it twice in the same way. It bore the indelible stamp of one mind, resourcefully inventive, yet primarily occupied not with the projection of effects or syncopated rhythms, but the concern of great music—tapping the inner world of feeling and experience, "realizing a temperament without describing it, with the mobility of the soul, with the swiftness of consecutive moments . . . seizing the human heart with that intensity which is independent of the 'idea.' "

III

That the *Black and Tan Fantasy* was no haphazard lighting of a spark in the dark I was soon to discover when I heard and studied the new works that flowed from the pen and orchestra of its composer. Out of the vast bulk of his work, thrown

With the majority I did not recognize it when it first came to my ears in the form of the "hottest, funniest record you ever heard." It was a Brunswick disc by a dance band named the Washingtonians, and I laughed like everyone else over its instrumental wa-waing and gargling and gobbling, the piteous whinnying of a very ancient horse, the lugubrious reminiscence of the Chopin funeral march. But as I continued to play the record for the amusement of my friends I laughed less heartily and with less zest. In my ears the whinnies and wa-was began to resolve into new tone colors, distorted and tortured, but agonizingly expressive.

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off in his cabaret-dance-hall-vaudeville-recording routine, I found a goodly residue of music that was of the same or superior calibre as the fantasy; and disregarding all that was merely conventional, noisy, and cheap, there was still a quintessence of precious quality for which one has no apter term than genius. At last I had found the answer to Clive Bell's accusation that jazz had a childish horror of the noble and the beautiful; the answer to his demand for "thought rather than spirits, quality rather than color, knowledge rather than irreticence, intellect rather than singularity, wit rather than romps, precision rather than surprise, dignity rather than impudence, and lucidity above all things."

The answer was—and almost alone still is—Duke Ellington, a young Negro pianist, composer, and orchestra leader, gifted with a seemingly inexhaustible well of melodic invention, possessor of a keenly developed craftsmanship in composition and orchestration. A man with a burly athlete's body like Robeson, the sensitive face and hands of a Roland Hayes. A man who knows exactly what he is doing: exercising his intelligence, stretching to new limits his musicianship, while he remains securely rooted in the fertile artistic soil of his race. A man who has evolved an unique pianistic technique, orchestral rather than solo, and who out of a group of some ten men has built his own orchestra, one of remarkable attainments in whatever it plays, but in his own creations a superb and personal instrument. And the man has stated in unmistakable words his own credo,* no press agent's blurb of a talented but ungrounded black, but the staunch ideal of a new Negro—evolution of the Southern darky and Harlem buck—an artist who has the right to claim, "I put my best thoughts into my tunes, and not hackneyed harmonies and rhythms which are almost too banal to publish."



IV

As a purveyor and composer of music that must be danced to (if he is to earn his living), Ellington's composition is narrowly limited by dance exigencies while he is allowed a wide range of experimentation in the way of instrumentation and performance. It is hardly remarkable that the latter experimentation has borne fruit; what is remarkable is that working within constricted walls he has yet been able to give free rein to his creative imagination and racial urge for expression.

* The music of my race is something more than the "American idiom." It is the result of our transplantation to American soil, and was our reaction in the plantation days to the tyranny we endured. What we could not say openly we expressed in music, and what we know as "Jazz" is something more than just dance music . . . There is no necessity to apologize for attributing aims other than terpsichorean to our music, and for showing how the characteristic, melancholy music of my race has been forged from the very white heat of our sorrows, and from our gropings after something tangible in the primitiveness of our lives in the early days of our American occupation . . . I think the music of my race is something which is going to live, something which posterity will honor in a higher sense than merely that of the music of the ball-room of today. *Rhythm*, March, 1931.

Perhaps the very handicaps, permitting no high-flown excursions into Negro Rhapsodies and tone poems, allowing no escape from the fundamental beat of dance rhythm, have enabled Ellington to concentrate his musical virility, draw out its full juice, dissipating none of his forces in vain heaven-storming. He finds his subjects close at hand and the very titles reveal the essential unity of his music-making with the life of his people in deep South or darkest Harlem: *Black Beauty, Awful Sad, Saturday Night Function, Parlor Social Stomp, Rent Party Blues, Song of the Cotton Field, Jungle Nights in Harlem, Swampy River . . .*

Ellington writes naturally for instruments alone, unlike the tunesters of Tin Pan Alley who can never divorce themselves from "words and music." Words may sometimes be added to his pieces, but always unhappily, and the only piece of his that falls into ordinary song classification—*I'm So in Love With You*—is the only one I know that is utterly devoid of character and interest. The human voice is not disdained, but in his works it operates only in an instrumental technique, wordlessly, one might say inarticulately if it were not for the definite articulation of its expressiveness. Once or twice actual words appear, but merely in the nature of a motto or catch-phrase,—"Play me the blues, boy, it's the blues I love to sing." The larger works of Gershwin, the experiments of Copland and other "serious" composers are attempts with new symphonic forms stemming from jazz, but not of it. Not forgetting a few virtuoso or improvisatory solos (by Zez Confrey, Venuti and Lang, Jimmie Johnson, or others), one can say truthfully that a purely instrumental school of jazz has never grown beyond the embryonic stage. Ellington has emancipated American popular music from text for the first time since the Colonial days of reels and breakdowns.

V

Ellington's compositions gravitate naturally toward two types, the strongly rhythmed pure dance pieces (*Birmingham Breakdown, Jubilee Stomp, New Orleans Low Down, Stevedore Stomp*, etc.), or the slower paced lyrical pieces with a less forcefully rhythmed dance bass (*Mood Indigo, Take It Easy, Awful Sad, Mystery Song*, etc.). Occasionally the two are combined with tremendous effectiveness, as in the *East St. Louis Toodle-O, Old Man Blues, or Rocking in Rhythm*.

The most striking characteristic of all his works, and the one which stamps them ineradicably as his own, is the individuality and unity of style that weld composition, orchestration, and performance into one inseparable whole. Ellington's arrangements of other composers' pieces reveal the same mastery with which he scores his own (indeed at times he comes close to creating an entirely new composition, as in *Got Everything But You*); his performance of even banal pieces like *Nine Little Miles from Tennessee* or *Three Little Words* are brilliant in the extreme; his own pieces retain many of their distinctive qualities when played by others. But all these variants present only scattering facets of his talents. To be observed completely and in their full expression they must be heard fused into one.

Except in certain solo works the balance and unity between content and form, written notes and sounded performance, has become something of a lost art since the Elizabethan madrigals and instrumental fantasies. A few composers, like Debussy and Delius, find the happy identity between material and medium, but they

are not so lucky as Ellington in possessing the instrument and ability to play their scores as ideally as they are written. The rise of virtuosity broke the golden nexus between creative and executive artist. Music has become too complex. Few modern works can be heard ideally except mentally, poring over the written score. Popular music sounds the lowest depths with one man writing a tune, another harmonizing it, a third scoring it, and a fourth called in for the actual performance. And one's ears cannot be deceived as to the barbarous conglomeration of individualities, blurring or burying whatever fragrance or delicacy any one talent may have contributed. Ellington is of course the rare exception, but his work—composed, scored, and played under one sure hand—gives a glimpse of an Utopian age in music that seemed forever lost.*

VI

In stylistic individuality alone Ellington is outstanding in popular music, for while Tin Pan Alley boasts many personalities, their color is seldom blended inextricably with their music. Whiteman was individual only when he alone had mastered a polished style; today he is a second- or third-rater. Gershwin, better The Gershwins, have developed a marked individuality; several others to a lesser degree. There are of course many highly individual soloists, but even when the finest are collected together, as they were in the hey-days of Red Nichols' Pennies, one gets marvellous but hardly homogeneous performances. It is as if one put Giesecking, Szigeti, Tertis, and Beatrice Harrison to playing chamber music together; whereas Ellington's band has achieved a homogeneity comparable only with that of the Flonzaleys. Imagine if you can that the Flonzaleys composed and scored as one man even as they played as one man, and that the style was not a perfect blend of four individualities but an entity, and you have some idea of the fusion of content, form, and medium in Ellington's work.

Within an Ellington composition there is a similar unity of style among the essential musical qualities of melody, rhythm, harmony, color, and form. Unlike most jazz writers Ellington never concentrates undue attention on rhythm alone. It is always vital, the exuberant life blood of his work, but its use is never synecdochical. Delightful and tricky rhythmic effects are never introduced for sheer sensational purposes, rather they are developed and combined with others as logical part and parcel of a whole work. There is a high degree of subtlety in treating the inexorable fundamental dance beat. It is never disguised, indeed often stressed, but it is combined with the flowing bass so adroitly that it provides the sturdy substructure on which Ellington rears his luxuriant structure of moving parts, forgotten except in that it provides the measure by which to appreciate the boldly declamatory freedom of the upper voices.

* The individual touch is carried even further into recording, and an occasional record, made with a keen understanding of microphone technique, reveals Ellington's work better than even a performance in the flesh. Hear such bits of matchless recording as the prominent bass saxophone melody in *Got Everything But You* with a trumpet counterpoint above, amazingly distant, pianissimo, and yet perfectly distinct; or the beginning of the *Mystery Song*, a similarly successful experiment in tonal perspective, with piano, string bass, and banjo fairly close to the microphone, while the brass, carrying the theme, are far back, sounding as ethereal as the "horns of Elfland, faintly blowing."

Harmonically Ellington is apt and subtle rather than obvious or striking. Except for sheerly declamatory lines, his melodies are clothed in the harmonies they themselves suggest. He thinks not in chordal blocks but in moving parts, and the resulting harmony (complex as it may be upon analysis) derives simply, inevitably from the fluent weaving of contrapuntal lines, each in itself melodically interesting.

In the exploitation of new tonal coloring, as has already been suggested, Ellington has proceeded further than any composer—popular or serious—of today. His command of color contrast and blend approaches at times an art of poly-timbres. Beauty of quality is the prime consideration, even although Ellington's beauty may be distorted, lean, and spare to unaccustomed ears. But he has liberated the saxophone from its usual oily blandness, expanded the tonal palette of the clarinet (particularly in the *chalumeau* register), and given the brass a range of kaleidoscopic tonal nuances that opens up a new world of enchanting tonal loveliness and poignancy.

Formally Ellington has not gone as far, although he has mastered the small form as thoroughly as Gershwin, and even *The Man I Love* is no more completely *durchkomponiert* than the *Creole Love Call* or *East St. Louis Toodle-O* with their perfectly sustained moods through even the contrasting episodes. The one attempt at a larger form, the two-part *Creole Rhapsody* (Brunswick), is not wholly successful, although it does develop and interweave a larger number of themes than is common in his work. Expanded to fill both sides of a twelve-inch disc (Victor) it becomes less integrated and the various episodes tend to fall apart. It is here that Ellington has most to learn and his present talents can find their best scope for further development.

Ellington achieves homogeneity in his compositions by the simple but natural development of rhythm, harmony, color, and form—even as they evolved in the history of music—from melody. The intoxicating rhythmic and coloristic multiplicity of his pieces springs from the fertility of his melodic invention. Since Brahms (except perhaps for Sibelius and Elgar) noble, spontaneous, unforced melodies have seldom been written. Melodies tend to become more and more short-breathed and unvocal, whereas Ellington's finest tunes spring into rhapsodic being as simply, as naturally as those of Mozart or Schubert. Characteristic of even the lesser tunes is their astounding fluidity and resilience of line, a return to the true rhapsody and freedom of earlier music, first scotched by the tyranny of the bar-line and eight bar phrase dogmas. Over the straining, strongly pulling bass and the fundamental beat, the true melody, or more often two or more melodies dip, curvet, swoop, and spiral in the untrammelled, ecstatic freedom of soaring gulls. And in addition to the Elizabethan buoyancy and flexibility of line, Ellington often captures something of the intensity of meaning attached to certain notes or phrases that Wagner was perhaps the first to give, making any note in the scale sound as though it were a "leading tone." In the melodies of *Black Beauty* and *Take It Easy* the looping line returns again and again to points of incredibly sharpened poignance.

VII

Analysis of Ellington's best compositions would be futile without lengthy illustrations in full-score notation. Even then the score could be fully appreciated only

with the aid of a recorded performance. I can only analyze some of my own impressions of the works, beg the alert listener to hear and study the records, and leave it to his own sensibilities. To me the hushed trumpets, "far away and long ago," in *Mood Indigo* and the *Mystery Song*, sing of as enchanted a Spring as Strawinski's trumpets at the beginning of the second half of the *Sacre*. To me the most daring experiments of the modernists rarely approach the imaginative originality, mated to pure musicianship, of a dozen arresting moments in Ellington's works. To me the most brilliant flights of Rimsky's or Strauss' orchestral fancy are equalled if not surpassed by many passages in the Ellington records,—a blazing parabolic trajectory, tail-spin and swoop, of clarinet, saxophone, or whole woodwind choir; a delicate birdlike fluttering or vigorous statement of the piano; a monkey-like chatter and stutter of the trumpets; a pattern, half-melodic, half-rhythmic, used *ostinato* fashion on the tubular bells, cymbals, or suddenly percussive piano.

To me again there is absolutely nothing in popular music, all too little in any

A NOTE ON THE ELLINGTON RECORDINGS

Duke Ellington and his orchestra have recorded at various times for all the major American recording companies and for several of the minor companies. For Victor they have recorded some seventy pieces, and there are others still to be released. For Brunswick some forty-five pieces (many of which are performed under the alias of the "Jungle Band"). Ellington is now under contract to Brunswick for twenty-four new record sides, to be released under his own name. For Okeh some twenty-four pieces (some of which are performed under the aliases of the "Harlem Footwarmers" or "Harlem Music Masters"). Ellington recorded his only disc of piano solos for Okeh. For Columbia he and his orchestra have recorded seven pieces (some under the aliases of "Joe Turner's Memphis Men" or "Sonny Greer's Memphis Men").

A brief list of the best and most characteristic Ellington recordings should include the following (and might be extended considerably further):

<i>East St. Louis Toodle-O</i> and <i>Got Everything But You</i>	Victor 21703
<i>Black Beauty</i> and <i>Take It Easy</i>	Br Brunswick 4009
<i>Creole Love Call</i> and <i>Black and Tan Fantasy</i>	Victor 21137
<i>The Mooche</i> and <i>Hot and Bothered</i>	Okeh 8623
<i>Black and Tan Fantasy</i> and <i>What Can a Poor Fellow Do?</i>	Okeh 40955
<i>Blues I Love to Sing</i> and <i>Blue Bubbles</i>	Victor 22985
<i>Old Man Blues</i> and <i>Jungle Nights in Harlem</i>	Victor 23022
<i>Creole Rhapsody</i> (two sides).....	Br Brunswick 6093
<i>The Mystery Song</i> (one side).....	Victor 22800
<i>Rockin' in Rhythm</i> and <i>Twelfth St. Rag</i>	Br Brunswick 6038
<i>Dreamy Blues</i> (<i>Mood Indigo</i>) and <i>Runnin' Wild</i>	Br Brunswick 4952
<i>Sweet Dreams of Love</i> and <i>Sweet Jazz O' Mine</i>	Victor V38143
<i>Awful Sad</i> and <i>Louisiana</i>	Br Brunswick 4110
<i>Limehouse Blues</i> and <i>Echoes of the Jungle</i>	Victor 22743
<i>It Don't Mean a Thing</i> and <i>Rose Room</i>	Br Brunswick 6265
<i>Haunted Nights</i> and <i>The Duke Steps Out</i>	Victor V38092

I should add *Parlor Social Stomp* and *Georgia Grind* (Perfect 104), *Song of the Cotton Field* and *New Orleans Low Down* (Vocalion 1086), but these are no longer obtainable, as I found to my dismay in trying to replace my own lost or broken copies.

music, that touches the uncannily twisted beauty, the acrid pungence of nostalgia which Ellington in his great moments achieves. I can compare it only with the tortured rapture of Roland Hayes' face and hands as he sings certain spirituals, an agonized ecstasy too profound, too piercing to be glimpsed without a sense of sacrilege that so naked a baring of the soul should be witnessed by others.

Ellington may betray his uniqueness for popularity, be brought down entirely to the levels of orthodox dance music, lose his secure footing and intellectual grasp in the delusion of grandeur. Much of his commercial work evidences just such lapses. But he has given us and I am confident will give us again more than a few moments of the purest, the most sensitive and ineluctable revelation of feeling in music today. And where the music of his race has heretofore been a communal, anonymous creation, he breaks the way to the individuals who are coming to sum it up in one voice, creating personally and consciously out of the measureless store of racial urge for expression.

These are lofty statements, but I have not set them down without weighing them carefully and finding their justification in an absorbed study of Ellington's work during the past five years. I feel it no blasphemy to say of him as Dyson says of the composer whom I revere above all others of the last century: "He does not distil his thought into a single line, nor into a striking passage. He is concerned primarily with texture, just as Bach was. It is sustained atmosphere he seeks, and texture is his approach to it . . . So homogeneous he is that it is sometimes hard to tell where folk song ends and Delius begins." Ellington's scope is vastly smaller, his atmosphere is sustained only over small canvasses, but to me intensity and not size is the true measure of musical worth. Working within his small but wholly personal range Ellington to me is one of Proust's great artists "who do us the service, when they awaken in us the emotion corresponding to the theme they have found, of showing us what richness, what variety lies hidden, unknown to us, in that great black impenetrable night, discouraging exploration, of our soul, which we have been content to regard as valueless and waste and void."

DUKE ELLINGTON RECORDINGS*

I (BRUNSWICK-VOCALION)

Approx. release date	No.	Titles	
July, '27	3526	<i>Black and Tan Fantasy / Soliloquy</i>	
Sept. '27	Voc 1064	<i>Birmingham Breakdown / East St. Louis Toodle-O</i>	
Sept. '27	Voc 1086	<i>Song of Cotton Field / New Orleans Low Down</i>	
Aug. '28	Voc 1153	<i>Doin' the Frog / Red Hot Brand</i>	
Sept. '28	4009	<i>Black Beauty / Take It Easy</i>	
Oct. '28	3987	<i>Yellow Dog Blues / Tishomingo Blues</i>	
Dec. '28	4044	<i>Jubilee Stomp</i>	
Jan. '29	4110	<i>Awful Sad / Louisiana</i>	
Feb. '29	4122	<i>The Mooche</i>	
Apr. '29	4238	<i>Tiger Rag (2 parts) (Ellington's Orchestra?)</i>	Jungle Band
June, '29	4309	<i>Harlem Flat Blues / Paducah</i>	Jungle Band
July, '29	4345	<i>Doin' the Voom / Rent Party Blues</i>	Jungle Band
Oct. '29	4450	<i>Jungle Mama / Dog Bottom (Ellington's Orchestra?)</i>	Jungle Band

* Titles in italics are Ellington's own compositions. Those followed by a question mark in parenthesis are possibly Ellington's.

Nov., '29	4492	Black and Blue / Jungle Jamboree	Jungle Band
Apr., '30	4705	<i>Jolly Wog / Jazz Convulsions</i>	Jungle Band
June, '30	4760	<i>Sweet Mama / When You're Smiling</i>	Jungle Band
June, '30	4776	Maori / Admiration	Jungle Band
June, '30	4783	Double Check Stomp / Accordion Joe	Jungle Band
Oct., '30	4887	<i>Cotton Club Stomp / Wall St. Wail</i>	Jungle Band
Dec., '30	4936	St. Louis Blues / Gotta Darn Good Reason Now	Jungle Band
Jan., '31	4952	<i>Dreamy Blues (Mood Indigo) / Runnin' Wild</i>	Jungle Band
Feb., '31	6003	Wang Wang Blues / Home Again Blues	Jungle Band
Apr., '31	6038	<i>Rockin' in Rhythm / Twelfth St. Rag</i>	Jungle Band
June, '31	6093	<i>Creole Rhapsody</i> (two parts)	Jungle Band
Mar., '32	6265	<i>It Don't Mean a Thing / Rose Room</i>	
May, '32	6288	<i>Blue Tune / Lazy Rhapsody</i>	
May, '32	20105	Creole Love Call / St. Louis Blues (12 in. disc)	
		(11 or 12 new records contracted for and now being made.)	

II (OKEH)

Jan., '28	40955	<i>Black and Tan Fantasy / What Can a Poor Fellow Do?</i>	
June, '28	41013	<i>Jubilee Stomp / Take It Easy</i>	
Oct., '28	8602	<i>Diga Diga Doo / Doin' the New Low Down</i>	
Dec., '28	8623	<i>The Mooche / Hot and Bothered</i>	
Jan., '29	8636	<i>Black Beauty / Swampy River</i> (Ellington piano solos)	
Apr., '29	8662	<i>Misty Mornin' / Blues With a Feeling</i>	
Nov., '29	8720	Jungle Jamboree / Snake Hip Dance	(Harlem Footwarmers)
Feb., '30	8746	<i>Blues of the Vagabond / Syncopated Shuffle</i>	(Harlem Footwarmers)
Mar., '30	8760	<i>Lazy Duke</i>	(Harlem Footwarmers)
Dec., '30	8836	<i>Big House Blues (?) / Rocky Mountain Blues (?)</i>	(Harlem Footwarmers)
Jan., '31	8840	<i>Mood Indigo / Sweet Chariot</i>	(Harlem Footwarmers)
Jan., '31	41468	<i>Ring Dem Bells</i>	(Harlem Music Masters)
May, '31	8869	<i>Old Man Blues / Rockin' in Rhythm</i>	(Harlem Footwarmers)

III (COLUMBIA)

June, '27	953-D	<i>Hop Head / East St. Louis Toodle-O</i>	
Sept., '27	1076-D	<i>Down Our Alley Blues</i>	
June, '29	1813-D	<i>Mississippi Moan / Freeze and Melt</i> (Turner's Memphis Men)	
Aug., '29	1868-D	<i>Saturday Night Function / Beggar's Blues</i> (Sonny Greer's Memphis Men)	

IV (VICTOR)

Feb., '28	21137	<i>Creole Love Call / Black and Tan Fantasy</i>	
July, '28	21284	<i>Washington Wobble / Harlem River Quiver</i>	
Sept., '28	21490	<i>Blues I Love to Sing / Blue Bubbles</i> (See also 22985)	
Oct., '28	21580	<i>Black Beauty / Jubilee Stomp</i>	
Jan., '29	21703	<i>East St. Louis Toodle-O / Got Everything But You</i>	
Jan., '29	V38007	<i>Bandanna Babies / I Must Have That Man</i>	
Jan., '29	V38008	<i>Diga Diga Doo / I Can't Give You Anything But Love</i>	
Mar., '29	V38034	<i>The Mooche</i>	
May, '29	V38036	<i>Saturday Night Function / High Life</i>	
May, '29	V38035	<i>Flaming Youth / Doin' the Voom Voom</i>	
May, '29	V38045	<i>Harlemania / Japanese Dream</i>	
June, '29	V38053	<i>Stevedore Stomp / The Dicky Glide</i>	
July, '29	V38058	<i>Misty Mornin' / Saratoga Swing</i>	
Oct., '29	V38079	<i>Cotton Club Stomp / Arabian Lover</i>	
Nov., '29	V38089	<i>Swanee Shuffles (?) / Mississippi</i>	
Dec., '29	V38092	<i>Haunted Nights / The Duke Steps Out</i>	
Mar., '30	V38115	<i>Breakfast Dance / March of the Hoodlums</i>	
May, '30	V38065	<i>Hot Feet / Sloppy Joe</i>	
July, '30	V38129	<i>Jazz Lips / Double Check Stomp</i>	

July, '30	V38130	I Was Made to Love You / My Gal is Good for Nothin' But Love
Sept., '30	V38143	<i>Sweet Dreams of Love / Sweet Jazz O' Mine</i>
Nov., '30	22528	<i>Ring Dem Bells / Three Little Words</i>
Dec., '30	23016	Hittin' the Bottle / That Lindy Hop
Dec., '30	23017	You're Lucky to Me / Memories of You
Jan., '31	23022	<i>Old Man Blues / Jungle Nights in Harlem</i>
Feb., '31	22586	Nine Little Miles / What Good Am I Without You?
Feb., '31	22587	<i>Mood Indigo / When a Black Man's Blue</i>
Mar., '31	22603	Blue Again
Apr., '31	22614	The River and Me / Keep a Song in Your Soul
Apr., '31	23036	Sam and Delila
May, '31	23041	<i>Shout 'Em Aunt Tilly / I'm So In Love With You</i>
Oct., '31	22791	<i>It's Glory (?) / Brown Berries (Harlem River Quiver)</i>
Oct., '31	22800	<i>The Mystery Song</i>
Sept., '31	22743	Limehouse Blues / Echoes of the Jungle
Mar., '32	Long-Playing	<i>Creole Love Call / Hot and Bothered / Mood Indigo</i>
Mar., '32	36049	<i>Creole Rhapsody</i> (2 parts, 12 in. disc)
Apr., '32	22938	Bugle Call Rag / Dinah
Apr., '32	22985	<i>Blues I Love To Sing / Blue Bubbles</i>

V (MINOR COMPANIES—INCOMPLETE LIST)

c. 1927	Perfect	104	<i>Parlor Social Stomp / Georgia Grind</i>
c. 1927	Pathé	36781	<i>East St. Louis Toodle-O / Jubilee Stomp</i> (Whoopee Makers)
c. 1927	Perfect	15126	Bugle Call Rag (Ellington?) (Whoopee Makers)
c. 1927	Perfect	?	<i>Take It Easy</i>
c. 1927	Harmony	?	<i>Stack O' Lee Blues</i>
c. 1927	Harmony	?	<i>Sweet Mama</i>
c. 1927	Harmony	?	Bugle Call Rag



Skryabin

By LAURENCE POWELL

Skryabin fondly thought himself a profound philosopher who gave his metaphysics to the world, not in words, but in sound. Most of the commentaries and critiques of his music welter in a mass of dilettante philosophy that is meant to explain his music, but succeeds only in confusing the issue and in rendering his music vastly complex, whereas in reality it is extremely simple. In order to analyze Skryabin's music it is necessary to ignore this philosophical stuff, so my first business herewith is to dismiss the philosopher in order to have privacy with the composer.

Some may object rigorously to this procedure, saying that his philosophy and music are inseparable, being complementary to each other. This cannot possibly be so, because it would make his music esoteric: a prerequisite to an enjoyment of his music would be a knowledge of all the extraordinary philosophy and theosophy in which he dabbled. Since countless folk who are innocent of any theosophical learning and moreover who are not addicted to ploughing through pages of program annotations enjoy his music and understand it better than most theosophists, I conclude that all the metaphysics behind Skryabin's music are very much behind the music and do not matter in the least. Music cannot express definite philosophical systems without the help of words, and in the present instance, since the words are supplied by highly imaginative commentators rather than by the composer, we may dismiss them. Skryabin talked about his pet theories to his friends, but he did not supply a definite philosophical program over the staves of his scores, though he did use very pictorial directions as to performance: he gave his commentators an inch in such expression marks as *caressante*, *de plus en plus passioné*, *avec une joyeuse exaltation*, *avec une ardeur profonde et voilé* and from this inch they have, most of them, taken a mile.

However, supposing Skryabin was a philosopher, what were his merits as such? It would seem that there is a certain antipathy between music and philosophy, because history has shown us that a philosopher usually makes a bad musician and a musician an execrable philosopher. Philosophy is primarily a matter of calm speculation, while music is a thing primarily emotional: the two blend sometimes, but at the best of times only to the detriment of both. We will let Hans von Bülow show us how bad a musician philosopher Nietzsche was. Nietzsche had sent von Bülow one of his compositions and this is, in part, what the musician wrote back to the philosopher: "Your 'Manfred-Meditation' is the extremest specimen of fantastic extravagance, the most disagreeable, the most anti-musical, that I have met with for a long time in the way of notes on paper." I can well imagine some philosopher hauling Skryabin over the coals for his metaphysics in as unmistakable words as the above.

How could Skryabin be a philosopher when everything about him was diametrically opposed to the calm speculative attitude of the philosopher? Of all composers he was the most temperamental and nervous, not to say neurotic: he took luxurious pleasure in moping about the murkiest recesses of the Darkened Valley and therefore experienced the opposite in paroxysms of what he called "ecstasy." The deeper

the melancholy, so much the more intense would be the ecstasy that overcame it. He spent the later years of his life literally cultivating ecstasy: this does not make a philosopher, though it might have made a mystic, but the word *mystic* is as indefinable as the word *beauty*. He was too aesthetic to be ascetic enough to be the type of mystic he imagined himself to be, namely the type who seeks union with the Deity while still in the flesh. The flesh, unfortunately, was his trouble; it was an obstacle even to his union with the U. S. A., let alone God. As soon as his mistress approached these shores to join him in New York, friends warned him to depart with her at once and thus avoid painful proceedings on the ground of "moral turpitude." He was by nature very erotic, and I will leave it to the Orientals to decide whether mystic union with the Deity can be achieved by ecstasy that derives from eroticism. It was precisely Oriental brands of philosophy that Skryabin most favored however, because his was a nature that exulted in the exotic. Had he been a Chinaman, Christianity would have served him the same purpose—it would have been the fetish that appears to be necessary to many creative artists. They do not carry poodles or tame monkeys like *prima donnas* and star tenors; no, they indulge in a more nebulous fetish. Wagner nursed one, and it was philosophy as was Skryabin's, but Wagner wrote his philosophy in so many long-winded explanatory metrical sentences, and then colored them with music: Skryabin tried to explain his cosmic thoughts in music, and failed.

II

All his later music was a by-product of his fetish, which became more and more an obsession as he grew older. The latter part of his life he was in quest of a *Fata Morgana*, which he called *The Mystery*. To give an idea of what this was I will quote Leonid Sabaneiev, who according to Alfred Swan, a writer on Skryabin, was one of Skryabin's closest philosophical coadjutors in the years of maturity. Sabaneiev writes: "The Spirit (the creative principle) is conscious of a polarity of the masculine and feminine elements, the one active, the other passive, the will and the resistance. The latter element, inactive and inert, becomes crystallized in the immobility of the material forms, in the World with its manifold phenomena. The separated poles reach in their separation a culminating point: the complete materialization and differentiation, the loss of any connection with the Deity. (In art—a division of its branches, formerly united, and the development of each branch in itself.) At this extreme point there arises a reaction in favor of a reunion: the World's love for the Spirit and vice versa—a mystical Eros. The purpose of the separation is achieved: the creative substance has left its mark on the matter and there begins a process of dematerialization, reunion. (In art—the union of separate arts, their synthesis.) This reunion is completed by means of the Mystery—the mystical act of the caresses of the Spirit and the World. There will ensue a mystical union taking a form that cannot as yet be comprehended. This will be a universal Death and new Life, a world cataclysm destroying physical life. . . ." Skryabin was actually striving to bring all this about in a work to be called *The Mystery*, which was to be a sort of religious rite incorporating all the arts and making use of perfume and light, which latter he thought was related definitely to sound. Exactly what *The Mystery* was going to be, it is impossible to say, because Skryabin died after having written only the text of the *Initial Act*.

But although *The Mystery* was never achieved it is highly important, because all his later works were offshoots from the idea and made of material that was discarded from the process of creation of *The Mystery*. All the last piano sonatas, *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus* were shed by the wayside, in his approach to the *The Mystery*. Thus in one sense having outgrown the early immature stage of Chopin worship and influence, Skryabin only composed one work. All the later works are intensely uniform in every technical respect, a theme from one work being only a slight variant of a theme from another work and so forth. This can indicate but one thing, and that is this: his philosophical fetish proved to be a positive deterrent to the freedom of his muse, narrowing him down to a futile attempt to do the impossible and make his music discourse a metaphysical system. So having seen that all this philosophy was purely an external influence that merely spoilt his music, but which cannot be inherent in the music, we will proceed to look at the music as music, and dismiss the philosophy, except perhaps where it may crop up as a nebulous program to the *Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*, and serve to prove the point that it was a deterrent factor.

III

Skryabin was a prey to obsessions even in the purely musical order, and in the later years of his life he became the slave of a chord, this being another factor in the monotonous unification of all his last works into what seems like one continued whole. The "mystic chord" as his disciples call it reads as follows when based on C: C, F sharp, B flat, E, A, D. Nothing intrinsically new, because it is simply a higher dominant discord with certain chromatic alterations: his use of it was new however, because he accepted it as a self-contained entity taking the place of the triad. It is quite logical in that every tone in it is extracted from the harmonic series, just as are the tones of the triad. It is a fragile, nebulous sounding affair, not without a certain pale lotus-like beauty, but when used to the excess indulged in by Skryabin, it becomes overbearingly monotonous. He built up whole pieces out of that one chord, extracting from it all his melodic material: it acts as a kind of enigmatic theme and he will use it on only two or three roots, and thus the various sections of a composition are hardly more than far-fetched transpositions of other sections, whatever tonal interest there is being derived from the chromatic juxtaposition of the two tonalities. A short lyric utterance constructed in this manner can be most effective as is evinced by the fourteen measure piano miniature, *Desir*, Op. 57, No. 1, but a twenty minute symphonic piece can only go on repeating itself. This is the chief fault in *The Poem of Ecstasy* and *Prometheus*, which are not organic wholes, one theme being disjunctly placed next another, with little sense of actual dependence on one another, except that they all emanate from one source, the "mystic chord." Skryabin was eminently a lyricist, being void of the constructive powers necessary to wield the larger forms, in this respect resembling Schumann, whose longer works are like strings of pearls, each pearl being a self-contained expression. Skryabin was a patternist, dependent on the simplest four-measure rhyming scheme, and it is significant that he declared he could see no form in Wagner. His handling of the orchestra is distinctive but limited to the viewpoint of the pianist: the two works to be heard on these new

records,* his fourth and fifth symphonies, sound like orchestrated piano music, rather than as music whose genesis was in terms of the orchestra. I strongly suspect that having written what seemed to him a piano sonata of cosmic significance, he proceeded to enlarge it and then orchestrate it.

The *Poem of Ecstasy* dates from 1908 and purports to express the ecstasy of Joy in Creative Activity, with a whole bundle of metaphysics thrown in. It is a series of climbs up to climaxes, the last of which is exhaustive, but it has the effect of delirium rather than ecstasy. At the date of its composition its composer had not completely succumbed to his "mystic chord," but nevertheless does not succeed in avoiding monotony on account of the almost total prevalence of chromaticism which to us is as dull as the total prevalence of diatonicism. The form is that of a Beethoven first movement, plus prologue and epilogue.

IV

Prometheus, Skryabin's last orchestral by-product of *Mystery* pursuit dates from 1910 and is a fair example of what he could do with his precious chordal structures. It is the story of Prometheus and the origin of fire, with a liberal sauce of theosophical concoction poured over the whole. Like the *Poem of Ecstasy* it was intended as a sort of religious ritual. Alfred Swan calls it "The border line between art and religion, between the actual and the supernatural, a form of magic incantation." All the later works of Skryabin sound like incantations, attempts at hypnosis. The score of *Prometheus* calls for piano and Tastiera per Luce, a keyboard for the throwing of light-rays; when a certain key is pressed a certain hue of light is thrown into the concert hall. Skryabin believed that certain sounds had definite counterparts in definite lights or colors, but since no two people agree as to the color of the key of, say, C there can hardly be much scientific fact in this.

These two works are too much the result of obsession and, musically, too much in the nature of experimentation to have much future. While the "mystic chord" was a stranger to our ears we thought them modern heralds of ultra-chromaticism, but once that chord is accepted they become intensely monotonous, their mood being uniformly that of the sick-room—the pale thoughts of an invalid. The breadth of Brahms, the grandeur of Wagner, the grit of Sibelius and the acidity of Strawinski give way to a nervousness, a fragility and an abnormal melancholy which have but small appeal for the average healthy man. A better recording of both works is certainly possible, but whether worthwhile is a moot point. More acceptable would be some albums of Skryabin's piano music, for it is in the realm of the piano that Skryabin certainly made a contribution to musical literature. He is the logical successor to his early idol, Chopin. He composed only for piano and for orchestra, occasionally throwing in a chorus as he does, to very bad effect, at the end of *Prometheus*.

He is a composer whom Time will turn upside down, in that his now blasély dismissed early works will eventually oust his later works, whose novelty is only

* POEM OF ECSTASY and PROMETHEUS. (Skryabin) Eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with Sylvan Levin (Piano) and Chorus from Curtis Institute of Music. Four 12-inch discs (V-7515 to V-7518) in album. Victor Set M-125. \$8.

very superficial. There is a strong originality underlying the early piano works, which have more universality and back-bone than the later works, but for this originality to assert its unostentatious self, we shall have to wait till audiences have ceased being obsessed with Skryabin's later obsessions. Not until we can see the emptiness of this froth, which he would probably have outgrown himself had he lived a full span of years, shall we be able to discover the genius in his earlier piano works, and then regret that Obsession and Death prevented his reaching maturity.

[Continued from page 151]

(bass), Robert Betts (tenor), and Benjamin de Loache, who takes the part of the "Sprecher" (Speaker). Three performances of the work were given in Philadelphia—at a Friday afternoon concert, the next Saturday night, and the following Monday night, April 8, 9 and 11, respectively. The records may be had in either standard or long-playing form. But there was no dubbing; the standard records (which have not arrived at this writing) were taken during the Friday and Monday concerts, and the long-playing version was recorded during the Saturday night concert. The standard set requires fourteen 12-inch discs, one side of which is devoted to explanatory remarks by Stokowski; the long-playing version runs to seven 12-inch discs. An explanatory record by Stokowski is also included in the long-playing set.



Of particular interest is the announcement that American record collectors who wish to join the Beethoven Piano Sonata Society, recently formed in England by His Master's Voice, must do so through RCA Victor dealers, as American subscriptions will not be handled by the English company. The price of the first album will be \$14, and it will include seven 12-inch discs played by Arthur Schnabel, the great German-Czechoslovakian pianist, who here appears on records for the first time. Definite information as to which sonatas will be included in the first album is not yet available, but we are assured that the contents will not include the more familiar works. The records will be available in England about June 1 and in this country shortly afterwards. All subscriptions must be in by June 15.



The inexpensive device designed to convert a 78 r.p.m. motor into a two-speed motor, for which there has been an increasing demand since the appearance of the long-playing records, will shortly be available, according to an announcement from RCA Victor. The device is called the RCA Victor Dual-Speed Turn-Table, and it can be installed very simply by lifting off the old turn-table, fastening a sliding switch to the motor board by means of two wood screws and placing the new turn-table over the motor spindle. With the switch in the "fast" position, the turn-table is directly coupled to the phonograph motor and revolves at 78 r.p.m. With the switch in the "slow" position, a ball race is brought into play, reducing the turn-table speed to $33\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m. A tone arm counterbalancing weight will be included with the new turn-table. This equipment can be used on all electric phonographs except the early models which employed the goose-neck type pick-up. The Dual-Speed Turn-Table will be available in three models from all RCA Victor dealers at \$7.50 each.

Recorded Programs

[Such a vast quantity of good music is now available for the phonograph that quite frequently records of more than ordinary merit are overlooked. It will be the purpose of this page to call attention to such records. Readers are invited to send in their suggestions. Records which appeared prior to the appearance of Disques and hence have never been reviewed in these pages will be given preference. All types and makes will be considered, and an effort will be made to avoid the hackneyed and excessively familiar.]

BACH

Suite No. 2 in B Minor

Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock.

[Two 12-inch discs (V-6914 and V-6915). \$2 each.]

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has an attractive list of records to its credit, but these two discs are surely among the most satisfying and enjoyable it has made. Frederick Stock's interpretations are frequently somewhat disconcerting. Where one looks for vigor and power—i.e., in the Finale of the Tschaikowsky Fifth Symphony,—he sometimes gives us only a weak, flaccid imitation of it; and where one looks for grace and charm—i.e., in Mozart's Symphony in G Minor,—Mr. Stock overwhelms us with a dazzling display of brilliancy and energy. The result is that a good many of the Chicago Orchestra's records are well recorded and played discs of unsatisfactory interpretations. But this has not always been the case, and there are several notable exceptions to the rule. The Suite in B Minor is one of them. Stock, his orchestra and the recorders must all have been at the top of their form the day the Suite was put on discs, for they are highly successful in presenting Bach's music in a buoyant, robust and sensitive manner. Mengelberg's recent Columbia version of the music is more impressive as a piece of recording, but it sounds dull and heavy beside Stock's genial reading.

SCHUBERT

Octet in F Major

Léner String Quartet (Léner, Smilovits, Roth and Hartman), C. Hobday (String Bass), C. Draper (Clarinet), E. W. Hincliff (Bassoon), Aubrey Brain (French Horn).

[Six 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 97. \$9.]

There are not many albums of chamber music that could more safely and enthusiastically be recommended than this altogether delightful recording of Schubert's Octet for string quartet, string bass, clarinet, bassoon and French horn. There are those who find the ordinary string quartet somewhat unsatisfying; the effect, they claim, tends to wear thin after an hour or so. But no such criticism could be applied to the Octet. The string bass adds body and the clarinet, horn and bassoon color to the music. There is thus plenty of variety and contrast, and though the work is rather long—it runs to twelve record sides—there are not many hearers who would venture to criticize it for its excessive length. It is in six movements, all of them charming and full of melodies of the utmost loveliness. The whole thing flows simply and spontaneously, and not a bar seems labored or forced. Draper's clarinet is heard to excellent advantage, and there is some fine horn playing by Aubrey Brain. The entire performance, indeed, is admirable, full of life and high spirits. The recording is highly successful.

GRIEG

Norwegian Dances

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Georg Schneevoigt.

[Two 12-inch discs (C-7128M and C-7129M). \$1.50 each.]

These dances, from Op. 35, are four in number: No. 1 in D, No. 2 in A Minor, No. 3 in G Major and No. 4 in D Major. They are graceful and full of zest, and the London Symphony under Georg Schneevoigt plays them admirably. The recording, though done several years ago, is extremely good.



ORCHESTRA

WEBER
C-68042D

DER FREISCHÜTZ: *Overture*. Two sides. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 22.

C-LX157
IMPORTED

EURYANTHE: *Overture*. Two sides. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 77.

Mengelberg and the Concertgebouw Orchestra have now recorded the three familiar Weber overtures, those to *Oberon*, *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*. The *Freischütz* is a little disappointing. It has a fault that is not common in most Concertgebouw Orchestra recordings, and in fact is absent altogether in its recent releases. The recording, ordinarily so fine in this orchestra's records, is here somewhat unsatisfactory. It lacks, in places, the fine strength and firmness that are usually notable features of the Concertgebouw discs; the effect is that of an orchestra playing in a huge, empty auditorium. The music does not come out with the clear, incisive ring that has made some of this orchestra's records so wonderful. Otherwise the record is very good. The strings have a lovely quality of tone, and the chorale played by the quartet of horns is well done. Mengelberg's interpretation is impressive. It is plain that he is the master of his fine orchestra. The Overture to *Der Freischütz* has been recorded plenty of times, but an altogether satisfactory version of the piece has yet to appear. Mengelberg's doesn't supply such a version, but his is the best available.

Euryanthe, based on a libretto that was remodelled nine times before Weber was satisfied with it, was produced at Vienna in 1823. Though it satisfied Weber, it did not please a noted contemporary of his, Goethe, who said: "Karl Maria von Weber should never have composed *Euryanthe*; he ought to have seen at once that it was a bad subject, with which nothing could be done." The recording in this record has the same fault as that noticeable in the *Freischütz*, though it is not so pronounced as it is in the latter disc. The drums are realistically recorded, and the tone of the orchestra is very good. Mengelberg's reading is satisfactory, but it isn't so vigorous as might be expected.

SKRYABIN
V-7515
to
V-7518

POEM OF ECSTASY and PROMETHEUS. Eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with Sylvan Levin (Piano) and Chorus from Curtis Institute of Music. Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-125. \$8.

This set, now on the regular RCA-Victor list, is considered in the article on Skryabin by Laurence Powell, printed elsewhere in this issue.

PICK-MAN-
GIAGALLI
MANCINELLI
C-GQX10494
IMPORTED

IL CARILLON MAGICO: *Intermezzo delle rose.* (Pick-Man-
giagalli) One side and
SCENE VENEZIANE: *La fuga degli amanti.* (Mancinelli)
One side. Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Tullio
Serafin. One 12-inch disc. \$2.



This appears to be Tullio Serafin's first appearance on records. Favorably known in America as one of the most brilliant of the Metropolitan Opera's conductors, Serafin has directed opera and symphony concerts in many parts of the world, including La Scala, the Paris Opéra, Covent Garden, and the Colón at Buenos Ayres. It is pleasant to note that, for his recording début, he carefully avoided the hackneyed stuff with which most conductors begin their phonographic work and selected, instead, two unfamiliar works by modern Italian composers. Both are attractive and worth having. The Pick-Mangiagalli piece, from a stage work called *Il carillon magico*—it was produced at the Scala in Milan in 1908—is a tender little intermezzo that works up to a powerful climax. It recalls, in places, Richard Strauss and Wagner. Some very beautiful playing is contributed by the strings. . . . The Mancinelli piece has been recorded before—by Italian H.M.V.—but it is doubtful if the disc had a very wide circulation. It was reviewed on page 170 of the July, 1930, issue of *Disques*. The *Scene Veneziane* is an effective and ingeniously orchestrated scherzo, forming a pleasant contrast to the Pick-Mangiagalli selection. Serafin conducts both works sympathetically and shows himself to be an admirable recording conductor; it is to be hoped that more discs of his will be forthcoming. The recording is an excellent piece of work.

HÉROLD
C-G2639D

LE PRÉ AUX CLERCS: *Selection.* (Hérold-Arr. Tavan) Two
sides. G. Ales (Violin), M. Lavallote (Flute), L. Cahuzac
(Clarinet) and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paul
Minnssart. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

The Overture to *Zampa* appears to be the only other work of Hérold's that has been recorded. One hears little of him these days, though Grove's gives him over a page and a half, much of it rather flattering. He was born in Les Ternes in 1791, the son of a musician. He wrote many operas and ballets. *Pré aux Clercs*, highly esteemed by the French in its day, dates from 1832 (just a year before the composer died). The present selection, featuring three soloists, a violin, a flute and a clarinet, is tuneful. The recording of the soloists is satisfactory, but the orchestra comes out very poorly and harshly. It sounds cramped and boxed-in, from which one suspects that Columbia found the record on one of the Parlophone or Odeon lists.

BERLIOZ
C-68043D

LES TROYENS: *Royal Hunt and Storm.* Two sides. Hallé
Orchestra conducted by Hamilton Harty.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Imported pressings of this record arrived in America several months ago, and the disc was reviewed on page 26 of the March *Disques*. The music is an intermezzo that occurs in Act 3 of Berlioz' opera *Les Troyens*. It is impressive music, effectively orchestrated, and Sir Hamilton Harty and the Hallé Orchestra give a vivid performance. The recording is admirable.



CONCERTO

VIVALDI

V-DB1595

and

V-DB1596

IMPORTED

CONCERTO IN G MINOR. (Vivaldi-Arr. Nachez) Four sides. Mischa Elman (Violin) and New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lawrence Collingwood. Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

An artist's standing in the musical world is not always accurately reflected in his phonograph records. There are some superbly gifted artists whose work, if it were judged solely by their recordings, would not be considered very impressive. (And, conversely, there are also some very mediocre artists who, through a combination of rare good luck and extraordinary competence on the part of the recording engineers, have managed somehow to make some outstanding records.) This, of course, can be ascribed to a variety of reasons. It may be that the recording does not do justice to the artist's interpretation, distorting and blurring it beyond recognition, as was the case with Walter Gieseking's discs until he recently made a Beethoven sonata and Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque* for Columbia. But when an artist widely considered to be one of the finest in his field makes a quantity of records which are splendidly recorded and yet are altogether undistinguished, one must look elsewhere for the reason. Unfortunately, one usually has to look no further than to the title printed on the record label. That has been the case with Mischa Elman. He has made quite a few records, but none of them has added notably to the library of recorded music. He has never yet essayed any of the indubitable masterpieces of violin literature—unless you consider the Tschaikowsky Violin Concerto in that category. Indeed, with the exception of that work—Elman's sole attempt at anything that required more space than can be had on the single side of a 12-inch record—and the early electrical records he made with his string quartet, his phonograph work has consisted almost entirely of negligible trifles whose only discoverable merit lay in the recording and interpretation. He has catered assiduously to the worst element of the record-buying public, turning out potboiler after potboiler. Of the great artists recording today, not even Kreisler's list could surpass his for tawdriness and dullness, for it must be remembered that Kreisler has partly made up for his potboilers by his recordings of the Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms concertos, not to mention his records made with Rachmaninoff. So that these two discs, though they carry no flaming masterpiece, come as something of a surprise and show a side of Elman's art that has only rarely been revealed to those who depend upon the phonograph for their music.

Vivaldi wrote a sizeable quantity of music, much of it for the violin, and there are said to be at least eighty manuscript concertos in Dresden alone. But comparatively little of his total output has been published. Five major works, however, have now been recorded: the Concerto Grosso in D Minor, recorded for Columbia by the Zürich Tonhalle Orchestra, the Concerto Grosso in G Minor, recorded by La Scala Orchestra for H.M.V., the Sonate en Concert, No. 5 in E Minor, played by Georges Pitsch and a string quartet for N. G. S., a Concerto in A

Minor for Violin and Orchestra, recorded by Armida Senetra for Parlophone, and, finally, this Concerto in G Minor which Elman plays.



The Concerto in G Minor, hitherto unrecorded, makes capital recording material, for it is the kind of music that can be reproduced with a high degree of realism. The work consists of three movements: an Allegro, an Adagio, and another Allegro. The music flows smoothly and briskly and is very attractive. In too large doses, Vivaldi would soon become monotonous, but two records make highly pleasant listening. The Concerto was arranged by Tivadar Nachez, a Hungarian violinist born in 1859. Nachez has written many violin solos based upon Hungarian melodies, and many classical works for his instrument have been edited by him. Elman plays the work beautifully. His glorious tone is admirably displayed by the recording, which is excellent throughout. The orchestral accompaniment, directed by Lawrence Collingwood, comes through splendidly and is well balanced with the soloist.

DOHNÁNYI	V-AW270 to V-AW272 IMPORTED	VARIATIONS ON A NURSERY SONG, Op. 25. Ernst von Dohnányi (Piano) and London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lawrence Collingwood. Five sides and
		RURALIA HUNGARICA: <i>Second Movement</i> . One side. London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ernst von Dohnányi.
		Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Minature Score: Eulenburg No. 735.

Ernst von Dohnányi, born in Pressburg, Hungary, on July 27, 1877, is one modern composer whose works can be highly enjoyed even by the most conservative. Perhaps this may be because Dohnányi is content to work in accepted forms and does not employ any unduly shocking effects. His music is always easy and pleasant to listen to; it has enough mild surprises and effective turns to avoid banality and monotony, but it never places a strain upon the listener, as so much modern music—both good and bad—does. But if Dohnányi is no pioneer, laboriously opening new paths and exploring hitherto unknown fields, he nevertheless is a highly original composer whose wit, taste and skill in manipulating his material are not equalled by many of his contemporaries. Luckily, several of his works have already been recorded. Most of us, in fact, have to depend upon the phonograph if we want to hear Dohnányi's music, for most of the big American orchestras, with the possible exception of the Chicago Symphony, unaccountably neglect this Hungarian composer's works. Just why it is not exactly clear.

The Chicago Symphony has recorded the delightful Suite for Orchestra, Op. 19 (incidentally, the Suite frequently appears on the Chicago Orchestra's programs), Fritz Kreisler has recorded the *Ruralia Hungarica*, Lionel Tertis and William Murdoch have recorded the Sonata in C Sharp Minor, Op. 22, and the Flonzaley Quartet, before disbanding, recorded the Quartet in D Flat Major, Op. 15 (this last, though announced for release by Victor, has not yet appeared). And there are several other less important discs. Dohnányi is also a distinguished pianist, and has recorded the Mozart Concerto No. 17 in G Major with the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, playing the solo part himself and directing the orchestra from the piano. Thus to the phonograph audience Dohnányi is not



exactly a newcomer, and in consequence there must by now be a very considerable group of collectors who, already charmed with such things as the Suite for Orchestra, will welcome the Variations on a Nursery Song.

None of the musical dictionaries we have consulted gives the date of the work, but in 1922 it was played at the Queen's Hall in London, with the composer playing the piano part, as he does in this set. The nursery song on which the variations are based is probably familiar to most of us, and it is generally included in the repertoires of the one-finger virtuosi. Probably its best known title is *Ah vous dirai-je, Maman*. The work consists of an Introduction, the theme and eleven variations. No. 7 is a waltz, No. 8 a march, No. 9 a scherzo, No. 10 a passacaglia, and No. 11 a chorale. Quite unexpectedly, considering the title of the work, the Introduction begins portentously, with the brass thundering ominously in the rear. There are great crashing chords and much agitated fiddling. Near the end of the first record side, the uproar gradually sinks to a whisper, there is a final outburst, quick and incisive, and then the piano—sounding as if it were played by one finger—gives out the innocent little nursery rhyme mentioned above. The effect of the sudden contrast is rather startling. Plucked strings accompany the piano for a while, and soon we are in the midst of some of the most entertaining music we have had on records for a long while. Most of the variations are pretty short, but all, without exception, are deft and neatly turned. The waltz is lilting, and the jolly little march that follows has a pawky swing, with effective grunts from the bassoon. The chorale which ends the work is somewhat similar in character to the Introduction. Just before the close, the pianist once again plays the simple little nursery rhyme in its original form. The whole work is full of sparkling humor and vivacity; the orchestration abounds with skilful touches. The piano has an important part, but it is considered as part of the orchestra rather than as a solo instrument.

The performance is as lively and deft as the music itself. With the composer at the piano, we are assured of an authoritative rendering. Dohnányi plays his part skilfully, and the London Symphony, under Lawrence Collingwood, is in fine form. The recording is admirable, making these records altogether commendable. . . . The movement from the *Ruralia Hungarica*, which occupies the final side of the set, is well played by the same orchestra conducted by the composer.

DVORÁK C-G68037D to C-G68041D	CONCERTO in B Minor, Op. 104. (Dvorák) Emmanuel Feuermann ('Cello) and members of the Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Emmanuel Feuermann. Nine sides and MINUET. (Valensin-Danbé) One side. Emmanuel Feuermann ('Cello) with piano accompaniment by Michael Taube. Five 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 172. \$7.50.
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Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 180.

This set, a Parlophone recording, at first appeared in pieces, a movement or so at a time. The first two movements were issued several years ago in Europe, but it wasn't until last year about this time that the third movement, completing the set, appeared. Now Columbia has gathered the whole thing together, enclosed it in

an album, and issued it in the masterworks series. The set was reviewed from the imported pressings on page 124 of the May, 1931, issue of *Disques*. The Concerto is by no means a piece whose main purpose is to explore to the fullest extent the resources of the 'cello, and in fact its very lack of technical brilliance has caused some to speak of it in rather slighting terms, alluding icily to its homely and crude character. It is filled with many fine, amiable tunes, and they are marked with a laudable sincerity and depth of feeling. Feuermann negotiates the work in fine style, and he is ably backed up by members of the Berlin State Opera Orchestra. The recording, in parts, leaves something to be desired. And the Minuet on the odd side isn't much of an asset to the album.



CHAMBER MUSIC



MENDELSSOHN
V-8223
to
V-8226

TRIO in *D Minor*, Op. 49. Eight sides. Alfred Cortot (Piano),
Jacques Thibaud (Violin) and Pablo Casals ('Cello).
Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-126. \$10.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 80.

With the publication this month of the Mendelssohn Trio in *D Minor*, the RCA Victor Company has now issued all of the records made by Cortot, Thibaud and Casals, and it is to be hoped that in Europe—where all of their records seem to be made—more are stored away for future release, or, better still, are now being made. For few collaborations have turned out so felicitously as this one, and the recordings have been strikingly successful from the very beginning. Starting with the lovely Schubert Trio in *B Flat Major*, Op. 99, this was followed up with the Schumann Trio in *D Minor*, Op. 63, a little Haydn Trio, the Beethoven *Archduke* and the Mendelssohn work here issued. The same matchless combination has also made the Brahms Double Concerto, in which Cortot, substituting the bâton for the keyboard, directed Pablo Casals' Barcelona Orchestra. In addition to all this, each of these artists has made many outstanding solo records, so that individually and collectively they rank among the greatest of contemporary recording artists. A new album set by them is therefore an event of some importance.

The Trio in *D Minor* was written in 1839 at Leipzig and Frankfort. What Grove's says of Mendelssohn's chamber music in general—"thoroughly individual and interesting, nothing far-fetched, no striving after effect, no emptiness, no padding, but plenty of matter given in a manner at once fresh and varied"—applies equally well to the Trio. It is charming, untroubled music, neither profound nor superficial, but full of graceful melodies and effective passages for the three instruments. It has been charged that the piano is given too much prominence, but this fault—if fault it be—in no way interferes with one's enjoyment of the music. Rather, it makes for greater variety and color, especially when it is played so beautifully as Cortot plays it. There are four movements—*Molto allegro agitato*, *Andante con moto tranquillo*, *Scherzo*; *Leggiero a vivace* and *Finale-Allegro assai*.



appassionato. The Scherzo is strongly reminiscent of the Scherzo in the *Mid-summer Night's Dream*. As for the interpretation, the fact that the record labels bear the names of Cortot, Thibaud and Casals is assurance enough that it will be a superbly finished and distinguished piece of work, and such it is. Each of the trio is at the top of his form. The recording calls for special praise, and the surfaces are unusually smooth and quiet, something highly desirable in chamber music.



PIANO

DEBUSSY

V-DA1240

to

V-DA1244

and

V-DB1593

IMPORTED

PRELUDES (Book I): *Danseuses de Delphes*; *Voiles*; *Le vent dans la plaine*; *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*; *Les collines d'Anacapri*; *Des pas sur la neige*; *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*; *La fille aux cheveux de lin*; *La sérenade interrompue*; *La Cathédrale engloutie*; *La Danse de Puck*; *Minstrels*. Twelve sides. Alfred Cortot (Piano). Five 10-inch and one 12-inch discs in album. \$9.50.

The gradual improvement in the quality of piano recording that has been noticeable in the past couple of years has been matched by a similar improvement in the quality of the piano music recorded. Thus far, of course, little more than the surface of piano literature has been touched, but there are unmistakable indications that the recorders are monthly becoming somewhat more daring and venturesome. Not so long ago collectors considered themselves fortunate indeed if a Beethoven sonata or a Chopin album was released. Now a whole album of so recent a composer as Debussy is not regarded as anything extraordinary. So that there may be such a thing as progress after all, and in a few years albums of works of composers like Medtner may be commonplace occurrences.

Many of the Preludes of Debussy have already been recorded separately, and some of them, indeed, are available in several versions. Others—such as *Les Collines d'Anacapri*, *Des pas sur la neige* and *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air*—have not to our knowledge been recorded at all. Whoever is responsible for the selection of the first book of Preludes as recording material for Alfred Cortot, then, deserves thanks, for it was an altogether admirable choice. Moreover, the album arrives at an especially propitious time, for M. Cortot's volume on "French Piano Music" has just been published, and the first chapter is devoted to the Piano Music of Claude Debussy, in which are illuminating notes on these Preludes. M. Cortot's opening remarks about the Preludes are so good that the temptation to quote cannot be resisted.

The romantic conception of the Prelude—the conception that flourished in the feverish imagination of Chopin—[M. Cortot says] as the fiery, concentrated expression of a human emotion constrained only by the limit of its agony or of its passion, was to mean nothing to Debussy until altered to conform to the demands of a more objective art and a less impulsive spirit.

It is not that he was deaf to the arresting note of a music in which an anguished sorrow was liberated, or that he disdained the tumultuous force of a paroxysmic climax

of sound . . . But he never relaxed for it the perfect command over his emotions; and when he means to excite ours, it is not by the power of feverish passionate inspiration. On the contrary, in his last works he forces himself into this seeming reticence of feeling; and it creates not only the individual note in his piano music but also the peculiar pleasure we get from it . . . it is content with a delicate impulsion, knowing that our imagination will multiply its feeling a hundredfold.



Coming after the abundance and fullness of statement of Wagner or Tschaikowsky, the Preludes seem particularly lean and spare, more the skeletons of ideas than the ideas themselves fully developed and completed. It is only after several hearings that one grows accustomed to this peculiar reticence and economy of speech and perceives with what superb art and taste Debussy has contrived to give the essentials without irrelevant details or over-emphasized statements. Debussy did not let his instinct for restraint carry him too far, however, and it in no wise detracted from the poetry and beauty of his music. The simple after the complex is always refreshing. One wishes there were space to print M. Cortot's explanatory notes on the various Preludes that comprise the first book, for they are sympathetic and revealing and help the listener to an appreciation of the music.

His interpretations of these pieces are very beautiful, and probably only Walter Gieseking could better them. The recording, far superior to that in the recent Victor set of the same artist's version of the Schumann *Études Symphoniques*, offers further proof that H.M.V. has greatly improved its piano recording in the last year or so; and in consequence its piano records now compare favorably with those of Columbia and Polydor, the two companies that have perhaps given us the finest piano records.

BEETHOVEN

B-90227	{	SONATA IN C MAJOR ("Waldstein"), Op. 53. Six sides.
to		Wilhelm Kempff (Piano). Three 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.
B-90229		

The *Waldstein* has been available in imported Polydor pressings for several years, and not so long ago an excellent version played by Frederic Lamond for H.M.V. appeared and was subsequently repressed by Victor. Now the Polydor version enters the Brunswick lists, making two domestic sets available. Many meanings have been read into the *Waldstein*, for it lends itself admirably to such pastimes.

It is in any case a magnificent piece of pianoforte music, impressive, majestic, full of unutterable mysteries and beauties. There is nothing sensational about Kempff's interpretation, but it is eminently satisfying; much the same can be said of the recording.

BACH

V-11219	{	TOCCATA and FUGUE in D Minor. Two sides. Winifred
		Christie (Piano). One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

This is the Toccata and Fugue made famous, for the phonograph audience at least, by the release of the Philadelphia Orchestra's version of the piece, still held to be one of the outstanding phonographic achievements of all time. Since that disc was issued, we have had the work in other versions for piano and organ. This new one, played on a two-keyboard piano, is satisfactory. The interpretation is crisp and vigorous, and the recording is an excellent piece of work.



OPERA

SULLIVAN
V-L24008
and
V-L24009

{ **PIRATES OF PENZANCE: *Abridged Version.*** (Gilbert-Sullivan) Civic Light Opera Company and Orchestra conducted by Lewis Kroll. Two 10-inch long-playing discs. \$1.50 each.

The Civic Light Opera Company's abridged version of the *Mikado* was issued on long-playing records a few months ago and was reviewed in the March issue of *Disques*. It was an excellent little set, satisfactorily recorded and competently played. Now the same people turn their attention to the *Pirates of Penzance*, and with equally felicitous results. Those who want the *Pirates* complete, of course, need only turn to the admirable D'Oyly Carte version, also available in a Victor album. But these two long-playing discs make an excellent substitute. A generous portion of the work is given, as can be seen from the following list of numbers included on the records: the opening chorus of pirates, *I Am a Pirate King, Climbing Over Rocky Mountains, Oh! Is There Not One Maiden, Poor Wand'ring One, I Am a Major General, I Am an Orphan Boy, Although One Dark Career, Pray Observe, When the Foeman Bares His Steel, Go Ye Heroes, A Paradox, Ah! Leave Me Not, With Cat-like Tread, Now What Is This*, and the Finale.

The cast includes Herbert Watrous, Howard Marsh, Vivian Hart, Frank Moulan, Mabel Thompson, John Eaton and a chorus and orchestra under the direction of Lewis Kroll. The performance is lively, and the recording deserves special praise. It compares favorably with the best standard recording, something that cannot truthfully be said of many of the long-playing discs thus far issued. Owners of long-playing machines have a considerable treat in store for them.

WAGNER
V-7523

{ **PARSIFAL: *Ich sah' das Kind (Herzeleide).*** One side and **TRISTAN UND ISOLDE: *Isoldes Liebestod.*** One side. Frida Leider (Soprano) and London Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

This record is so good that one wishes there were more of it. Both selections have been tried before, and the *Liebestod*, indeed, can be found in numerous versions. But all leave the hearer vaguely unsatisfied. The *Herzeleide* here is exquisitely sung, as is to be expected from so gifted a Wagnerian singer as Frida Leider, and the orchestral background is eloquently played by the London Symphony under Barbirolli. As for the *Liebestod*, the most satisfying recording of it that this reviewer has ever heard is Furtwängler's orchestral version, a wonderful piece of recording and interpretation. In this new record, both singer and orchestra receive admirable coöperation from the recorders, and the results are singularly impressive and moving. In these days of complete operas, single discs are not so tempting as once they were, but the merits of this one are of such a high quality that it is eminently worth while investigating.

WAGNER V-DB4400 IMPORTED	LOHENGRIN: <i>Lohengrins Ankunft</i> . Two sides. Marcel Wittrisch (Tenor), Kate Heidersbach (Soprano), W. Domgraf-Fassbaender (Bass), chorus and orchestra conducted by Clemens Schmalstich. One 12-inch disc. \$2.	
BEETHOVEN V-EW95 IMPORTED	FIDELIO: <i>Gefangen Chor</i> . Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Leo Blech. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.	

Operatic discs being somewhat less numerous than usual this month, two good ones like these will be welcome. The *Lohengrin* disc covers the first twenty-five pages of the last scene of Act I. Lohengrin has just arrived at the meadow on the banks of the Scheldt near Antwerp. The record begins with the brief chorus of welcome and continues uncut to Lohengrin's *Nun hört!* In between are included the familiar farewell to the swan, the greeting to the king, and the ensuing duet between Lohengrin and Elsa. Marcel Wittrisch as Lohengrin and Kate Heidersbach—who has a small but pleasing voice—sing expressively, and Willy Domgraf-Fassbaender as the King is satisfactory. The chorus and orchestra, under Schmalstich's direction, are excellent, and all in all the record can be highly recommended to the opera lover. *Lohengrin*, outside of the abridged version issued by Brunswick, has not been explored with any degree of thoroughness by the recorders . . . The *Fidelio* excerpt gives the chorus sung by the prisoners just before the close of Act I. Elsewhere unrecorded, the disc is well worth having.

RAVEL C-LF96 IMPORTED	L'ENFANT ET LES SORTILÈGES: (a) <i>Cakewalk</i> . (b) <i>L'Arithmétique</i> . Two sides. L. Mertens (Mezzo-Soprano) and H. Marcotty (Tenor) with orchestra of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels, conducted by Maurice Bastin. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.	

There isn't much to be said of this record of two excerpts from Ravel's lyric play *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. The work was written in 1924 and produced at Monte Carlo the following year. Some may remember Coppola's recording *Five O'Clock* (V-9306) from the same work. The side labelled *Cakewalk* on this disc offers much the same material, only with voices. The result is at best only mildly amusing. The singers' voices are greatly over-amplified, but the orchestral part comes through with a high degree of realism. Those familiar with the whole work may find the record interesting; the average collector, however, can pass it by without fear of having missed anything extraordinary.

WAGNER C-G4066M	LOHENGRIN: (a) <i>Euch Lüften, die mein Klagen</i> . (b) <i>Einsam in trüben Tagen</i> . Two sides. Lotte Lehmann (Soprano) with orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.	

There is always room for so beautifully sung a record as this one, even if the selections are rather familiar. In both pieces, Lotte Lehmann's superb voice is heard to excellent advantage, and Dr. Weissmann provides exemplary orchestral accompaniments. The recording is good.

—New Issues—
Columbia
Masterworks*

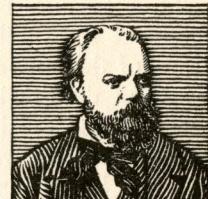
DVORÁK: CONCERTO IN B MINOR, OP. 104, FOR VIOLONCELLO AND ORCHESTRA. In adding this beautiful Concerto to the restricted literature of the 'cello Antonin Dvorak made all musical art his debtor. The work was commenced during the composer's sojourn in America, from 1892 to 1895.

The concerto is an unquestioned masterpiece. The solo part is rather more integrated with the orchestra that is frequently the case; it fulfills almost wholly nevertheless the ideal for this form established by Mozart.

There is every reason why the work should be a favorite. It evokes the noblest tones of the instrument, in its lyric passages, while having also its moments of lightness and brilliance. It suggests much of Dvorak's longing for his native land in the exotic and wholly Czech melodic elements which enter from time to time, and is in all respects a composition of striking and unforgettable individuality. It is recorded by a famous German 'cellist due to make his first American appearance during the coming season.

Masterworks Set No. 172 †

Dvorák: *Concerto in B Minor, Op. 104, for Violoncello and Orchestra. Emanuel Feuermann with members of the State Opera Orchestra, Berlin, conducted by Michael Taube. In Nine Parts, on Five Twelve-Inch Records, \$7.50 with Album.*



WEBER: DER FREISCHÜTZ: OVERTURE. Mengelberg's new recording of this great overture—so exceedingly difficult to record—is another of his many triumphs. The Freischütz Overture has few equals in the interest and variety of its themes. There is a solemn beauty in the opening adagio; the brilliant Wolf's Glen passage brings out the strings, brass and woodwind in magnificent style, while the lovely air of Agatha engages the whole orchestra in a blaze of vivid color. This score, old in years, is ever new and vital.

Weber: *Der Freischütz: Overture. Willem Mengelberg and Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam. In Two Parts, on One Twelve-Inch Record, No. 68042-D, \$2.00.*

BERLIOZ: LES TROYENS: ROYAL HUNT AND STORM. It is well known that there are few conductors in the world so capable as Sir Hamilton Harty in interpreting the music of that original and unhappy genius, Berlioz. The last of his operas—the gigantic Les Troyens—contains a symphonic entr'acte, The Royal Hunt and Storm, of amazing vividness and power. The picture, we are to suppose, is that of a group of naiads at play, disturbed by huntsmen who in turn fly for their lives before a mighty storm. The contrasts and shadings, in the recording, are magnificently done.

Berlioz: *Les Troyens: Royal Hunt and Storm (Symphonic Entr'acte for Orchestra). Sir Hamilton Harty and Hallé Orchestra. In Two Parts, on One Twelve-Inch Record, No. 68043-D, \$1.50.*

† This set is offered for sale in the United States of America and Canada only



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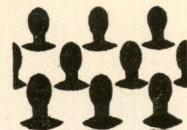
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SCHÖNBERG
V-7524
to
V-7537

GURRE-LIEDER. (Jacobsen-Schönberg) Twenty-eight sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with Paul Althouse (Tenor), Robert Betts (Tenor), Jeannette Vreeland (Soprano), Rose Bampton (Contralto), Abrasha Robofsky (Bass), Benjamin de Loache (Sprecher), and Princeton Glee Club, Fortnightly and Mendelssohn Clubs. Fourteen 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-127. \$28.

Review copies of this set, surely the greatest recording venture ever undertaken, arrived too late for it to be dealt with in this issue, but next month an article by Mr. Joseph Cottler will be devoted to the records and the music. The records were made during the actual performances and are pressed on Victrolac. Judging from the several sides we listened to, the recording seems to be extraordinarily fine. The *Gurre-Lieder* will also be available on long-playing discs, not dubbed from the standard records but made during one of the three performances of the work given in Philadelphia. The long-playing set, we understand, will comprise seven 12-inch discs, and will be \$7 cheaper than the standard set.

CARPENTER
V-1559
and
V-1560

SONG OF FAITH. Four sides. Chicago A Cappella Choir, Organ and Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nobel Cain. Two 10-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

These records, now listed in the regular June supplement, first appeared last month, and they were noticed in the May issue of *Disques*. Victor's renewed recording activities are deserving of the utmost praise, for not only is the recording in the new releases of a very superior quality, but excellent judgment is being displayed in the selection of works to be recorded. *Song of Faith*, written by Mr. Carpenter for the Washington Bicentennial, was well worth recording, and it is to be hoped that the discs will enjoy the lively sale they merit. That is perhaps the most convincing way in which collectors can prove to the manufacturers that they are anxious for recordings of new music.

BEETHOVEN
C-G4067M

DIE EHRE GOTTES AUS DER NATUR. (Beethoven) One side and
WIR TRETEN ZUM BETEN (*Ancient Song of the Netherlands*). (Arr. Von Kremser) One side. Richard Tauber (Tenor) with chorus and organ conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

This record, whatever its other shortcomings, has plenty of life and gusto. Beethoven's *Worship of God in Nature* brings nothing new to records, but Tauber's version is well sung, and the chorus is heard to excellent advantage. The Netherlands song on the reverse side is stirring. The recording is satisfactory.

New Victor Releases

MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

Poem of Ecstasy and Prometheus: The Poem of Fire (Scriabin). Played by Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, each on two double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 7515-7518 . . . in automatic sequence Nos. 7519-7522. In Album M-125 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$8.00.

Every music lover will jump at the chance of including in his collection these marvelously reproduced compositions by Scriabin. Here is an album that offers much. First there is the music *per se*, which was influenced by the religious creed which the composer subscribed to . . . then there is the magnificent interpretation of Dr. Stokowski and his men. You will find new interests awakened with each hearing of the compositions . . . and delight in the ability to listen to them as often as you wish.

Trio in D Minor opus 49 by Mendelssohn. Played by Alfred Cortot, Jacques Thibaud, and Pablo Casals on four double-faced 12-inch Victor Records Nos. 8223-8226 . . . and in automatic sequence Nos. 8227-8230. In Album M-126 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$10.00.

This unusually melodious trio is instantly appealing on account of its brightness and spontaneity . . . characteristics of the composer which the artists have brought out brilliantly. Rare beauties of shading, coupled with a perfection in the art of ensemble that is absolutely peerless will make you want this album. Listen to the Scherzo. You will be conscious at once of a similarity to another favorite by the same composer.

RED SEAL RECORDS

Song of Faith (John Alden Carpenter). Performed with organ and orchestral accompaniment by the a Capella Choir of Chicago conducted by Noble Cain on Victor Records Nos. 1559-1560. List price, \$1.50 each.

Beautiful Isle of Somewhere and *All Through the Night*. Sung with organ accompaniment by Richard Crooks on Victor Record No. 1558. List price, \$1.50.

Toccata and Fugue (Bach). Played on the Bechstein-Moor piano by Mme. Winifred Christie on Victor Record No. 11129. List price, \$1.50.

Parsifal—Ich sah' das Kind and *Tristan und Isolde—Isoldes Liebestod*. Sung with orchestral accompaniment by Mme. Frida Leider on Victor Record No. 7523. List price, \$2.00.



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FEARIS
V-1558

{ BEAUTIFUL ISLE OF SOMEWHERE. (Jessie Brown Pounds—John S. Fearis) One side and
ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT. (English words by Walter Maynard) One side. Richard Crooks (Tenor) with organ accompaniment by Jesse Crawford. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

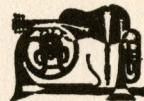
There is little to be said of this record save that it is beautifully recorded, and Mr. Crooks gives his usual competent performance.

SCHUBERT
B-85009

{ AM SEE. One side and
DER ZURNENDE BARDE. One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone) with piano accompaniment by Franz Rupp. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

A new Heinrich Schlusnus disc is always an event of some importance for the collector of lieder records. This time he offers two Schubert songs that appear to be recorded here for the first time. The first is a slow melancholy song; the second, by way of contrast, is more animated. Both are beautifully sung, with admirable piano accompaniments by Franz Rupp.

MISCELLANEOUS



TANGOS

{ ARGENTINE TANGOS. Ten sides. Orquesta Tipica conducted by Francisco Canaro.
Five 10-inch discs in album. Haynes Griffin Chromium Album Series. \$7.

Next to the waltz there are few dance forms more fascinating than the tango, though both, in this land of Prohibition and the fox-trot, are less popular than they ought to be. The lugubrious wails that pass for waltzes in our ball rooms have little in common with the fresh, sparkling waltzes that come—now, alas, much less frequently than in former years—from Austria; likewise, the cheaply decorated and excessively sentimental pieces that are played as tangos by most European and North American orchestras are far removed from the genuine Argentine tango. Both forms, in foreign hands, lose much of their individuality and charm, becoming just more insipid “novelties”; both forms, to produce the proper effect, need competent interpreters, and competent interpreters are not always easily accessible . . . Haynes Griffin has here collected a group of Parlophone records containing Argentine tangos played by an orchestra which we are assured is the real thing. The collection, containing five 10-inch records, is enclosed in an album tastefully bound in black and chromium, and in appearance it is surely one of the most attractive we've ever seen. The tangos themselves, by a variety of composers, are graceful



RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF

J U N E

90227	BEETHOVEN —SONATA C MAJOR, Op. 53, (Waldstein) Piano Solo. First Movement: Allegro con brio—Pts. I & II WILHELM KEMPFF	Recorded in Europe	\$1.50
		PRICE	
90228	BEETHOVEN —SONATA C MAJOR, Op. 53, (Waldstein) Piano Solo. Second Movement: Adagio molto. Third Movement: Allegretto moderato—Pt. I WILHELM KEMPFF	Recorded in Europe	\$1.50
		PRICE	
90229	BEETHOVEN —SONATA C MAJOR, Op. 53, (Waldstein) Piano Solo. Third Movement: Allegretto moderato—Pt. II Third Movement: Prestissimo—Pt. III WILHELM KEMPFF	Recorded in Europe	\$1.50
		PRICE	
85009	SCHUBERT —DER ZÜRNENDE BARDE (The Wrong Minstrel) AM SEE (On the Lake) HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS , Baritone State Opera, Berlin	Recorded in Europe	\$1.25
		PRICE	

Brunswick Records

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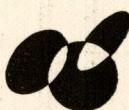
and pleasing, and the playing is always clean, incisive and effective, happily free from foreign influences. The orchestra is very small, perhaps too small, for at times the music sounds rather thin. The composers represented are Aieta, A. Sanders, Francisco Canaro (who directs the Orquesta Tipica in all of these records), C. Posadas, A. Cadicamo, E. S. Discapola, Sciamarella and Courau, all of them unfamiliar names. The pieces included are: *Adios Muchachos!*; *Prisoniero*; *Puentecito de Plata*; *Retirao*; *Chanta Cuatro*; *Yira, Yira*; *La Brisa*; *Llevatela Todo*; *En Silencio*; *Se Achaharon Los Otarios*. The recording is admirably clear.

~~GRANDJANY
CORELLI
DEBUSSY
C-2640D~~ { (a) ET RON RON, PETIT PATAPON (*Variations on an old French Yuletide Song*). (Grandjany) (b) JIG. (Corelli) One side and ARABESQUE NO. 1. (Debussy) One side. Bernard Zighéra (Harp). One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Mr. Zighéra is harp soloist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and has once before appeared on the Columbia lists, playing Granados' *Andaluza* and Tournier's *Vers la Source dans le Bois* on a 10-inch disc that was released in April, 1931. The variations on an old French Yule-tide Song are immensely charming, as is the Corelli *Jig*, and Mr. Zighéra's performance is as light and gay as the music. The Debussy *Arabesque* on the reverse side is played with similar grace and skill. The recording is admirable, making the disc an exceptionally attractive one, especially when one considers the modest price.

V-36051 { USEFUL PHRASES IN ENGLISH-GERMAN. Cyril Nash and Anton Hermann Winter. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The idea behind this record is an excellent one, and it is sufficiently indicated by the title. Mr. Nash speaks a phrase in English, and Mr. Winter repeats it in German. The phrases deal with situations that might arise at the customs, railway traveling, at the hotel, the exchange office, in the street, in the shops, at the restaurant, visiting, etc. A printed leaflet, giving the English and German of the phrases spoken on the record, is included with the disc. On the leaflet one of the phrases is "Please speak slowly," but Mr. Nash, who apparently is an Englishman, must have seen that common American traffic warning "Drive Slow," for he speaks the phrase thus: "Please speak slow." However, Mr. Winter's contribution to the record is the more useful one, and we are assured that his pronunciation is admirable. It is to be hoped that the same idea will be applied to other languages, and further English-German records like this one ought to be very useful.



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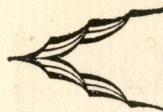
"Infinite riches in a little room" is the apt quotation from Christopher Marlowe used by a subscriber to express his opinion of the magazine.

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CORRESPONDENCE



More Haydn and "Meistersinger" Discs Editor, *Disques*:

Several of the musical magazines, *a propos* of the Haydn bicentenary, printed lists of records available, but not one, to my knowledge, mentioned two which are of outstanding merit. I refer to the record of the *Insanae et vanae curae* (badly misspelled both in the catalogue and on the label), performed by the Choir of the Temple Church, London, on H.M.V. No. C2053; and that of Lotte Leonard singing the aria *Nun beut die Flur* from *Die Schoepfung* (The Creation) on Parlophone No. 9414. It is surprising that both of these records should have been generally overlooked.

May I be permitted comment on your admirable article on *Die Meistersinger* recordings in the January issue? You will probably agree, now that you have heard it, that Bruno Walter's record of the Overture is the best to be had today. It is the only single-disc version which does not seem hurried. This record proves that pace is not entirely a matter of speed. Walter imparts just the right amount of dignity to the piece. I was rather surprised that no mention was made of Coates' record of the Prelude to Act III. Schillings' record is far too fast in tempo, and the Pierné record is coarse in tone and poor in balance. Coates' record is not only well recorded and interpreted, but has the customary concert ending. In regard to the *Preislied*, it is curious that the only complete version of this was overlooked. It is sung by Sigmund Pilinsky with the chorus and orchestra of the Berlin State Opera House, under the direction of Dr. Weissmann, on both sides of Parlophone record No. E10947. The soloist is, perhaps, no more than adequate, but the spirit of the whole performance leaves no doubt as to the superiority of this version.

HENRY S. GERSTLÉ

New York, N. Y.

Recorded Programs

Editor, *Disques*:

Please accept my thanks for the new page you have added to *Disques* in the March number. I mean page 22, "Recorded Programs." It seems to me an excellent idea. I took advantage of it at once and got a

copy of the Mozart symphony. It is a delightful work and delightfully recorded. My fund for investment in records is limited and I must expend it judiciously. This record, somehow, had not clicked with me when it was issued, but now that I have it, I would not have missed it for anything.

Thank you once more.

LINDSAY B. LONGACRE

Denver, Col.

At Last: Praise for the Long-Playing Record!

Editor, *Disques*:

Glancing at a January number of *Disques*, I was impressed by some of the unfavorable comments there published on the long-playing records. I want to put in a strong word for these records. I recently rebuilt my own radio-Victrola, installing a two-speed motor, electric pickup, *resistance coupled* amplifier, and good loudspeaker. For years my Victrola had stood unused. Now, with the Fourth and Fifth Beethoven Symphonies, the *Peer Gynt* Suites and the instrumental Schubert record, all long-playing, I use it every night. Thus far, to be sure, the quality does not equal, for instance, the Seven Variations on a Theme from the *Magic Flute* by Casals and Cortot (my standard of phonograph reproduction), but for long instrumental compositions, the absence of time out for changing records more than makes up for the slight deficiency of quality. It is indeed *something* not to have your symphony spoiled by sitting on the edge of your chair waiting for the record to run out.

Let me urge you, and through you the recording companies, to push, by all means possible, this great advance in musical reproduction. In particular, the Victor Company should concentrate their long-playing records on the long instrumental compositions—symphonies, concertos and sonatas,—for which they are best adapted.

My only criticism is the occasional sour passage—speed change in reproduction or recording, but probably the latter, since it occurs in many electrical recordings, both old and new style.

R. H. CANFIELD

Washington, D. C.

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NEW MUSIC

SUITE for Viola and Piano, Op. 4. By N. Tchemberdchy. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Universal Edition).* \$2.25.

For some unaccountable reason the viola has been unduly neglected as a solo instrument by modern composers. Honegger with his Sonata and Ernest Bloch with his Suite have shown that as a vehicle of expression the viola is far from being inferior to the other members of the string family and that the violin and 'cello need not have a monopoly of the sonata and suite literature. The present little work of N. Tchemberdchy will be warmly welcomed by viola players everywhere as a distinct contribution of importance to the scanty literature of their instrument. It is in three movements, with the opening lyrical theme—Andantino in 7/4 time—in C minor cleverly transformed into an Allegro theme, 4/4 time in F major, in the last movement. The constant changes of the time-signature in the first movement from 7/4 to 6/4 and 11/4 etc. do not jar the ears, as the melodic line progresses very smoothly, and there are no sudden arbitrary changes of rhythm to disturb the even flow of the melody. The piano part is rich in harmonic and rhythmic effects, and the whole Suite will make an excellent number in a recital program.

"VODVIL": A Satirical Cycle of Songs. By Harvey Enders. Philadelphia: *Elkan-Vogel Co.* \$1.

These nine amusing songs are supposed to represent the impressions of an entire program, beginning with an overture at 8:25 and ending with a curtain number at 11 o'clock. The words and music are excruciatingly funny, and the remarks to the performers are in true Satien vein, as, for example, "At a moderately fast gait and with a suggestion of ballyhoo," "Not too seriously but with a bit of regard for operatic tradition." The overture is a clever parody on the Prologue to *Pagliacci*, and the number entitled *Prima Donna* is a satire on the Verdian operatic recitative. Good musical humor is a rare quality, and at the present time it is doubly welcome.

SUITE CLASSIQUE for Piano, Op. 10. By Markian Frolow. New York: *Associated Music Publishers, Inc. (Universal Edition).* \$2.50.

Although the six numbers of the Suite are written in old forms—*i.e.*, Prelude, Sarabande, Allemande, etc.—there is no attempt to imitate Bach or Handel contrapuntally except in the Prelude. The pouring of new wine into old bottles seems to be a favorite sport of contemporary composers, as witness Schönberg's Op. 25 and Strawinsky's Concerto for Violin. This Suite, though, is not "modernistic" in the sense in which the term is used at present, but typical of Russian piano music of the pre-Skryabin period, with smooth, well-sounding modulations and beautiful thick harmonies. The most brilliant number of the set is the Gigue, which could be used as a single number for display of virtuosity.

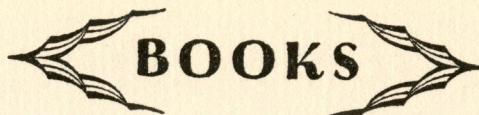
TRIO IN G MINOR for Violin, 'Cello and Piano. By Karl McDonald. Philadelphia: *Elkan-Vogel Co.* \$2.

A pleasantly sounding Trio, although devoid of originality either melodically or structurally. It is written in the conventional harmonic idiom strongly reminiscent of the trios of Arensky or Tschaikowsky, with the same melancholic lyricism and the recurrence of the main theme of the first movement at the end of the last. Mr. McDonald is an American composer born in Colorado and at present residing in Philadelphia.

SONATA for Piano. By Alexander Steinert. New York: *Associated Music Publishers (Universal Edition).* \$1.75.

This Sonata in one movement, dedicated to Vladimir Horowitz, is one of the most scholarly works for piano that have appeared recently. The initial theme in 5/8 time with the subsidiary motives are so cleverly handled and elaborated in their constant reappearance that the whole Sonata is a *tour de force* of thematic development. That does not mean that it is in any way dry or dull, as there are plenty of pianistic effects in it, and the fortissimo climax on the last page is especially fine.

MAURICE B. KATZ



BOOKS

SIBELIUS. By Cecil Gray. New York: *Carl Fischer, Inc.* \$2.50.

Mr. Gray's thoughtful little volume comes at an especially appropriate time. In recent years there has been a steadily mounting interest in Sibelius, and ever since the inception of electrical recording there have been earnest demands for records of his works other than the ubiquitous *Finlandia* and *Valse Triste*. Last year the Finnish Government and the Columbia Graphophone Company collaborated in issuing the first two symphonies, and shortly afterward the *Swan of Tuonela* (Victor) and *En Saga* (H.M.V.) followed. Moreover, several of Sibelius' works were played in Boston, Philadelphia and New York, so that an extraordinary amount of interest was stirred up in behalf of the composer.

With all this interest, however, there was no adequate biographical or critical study of the man and his works available in English, and those who wanted to know something about Sibelius, in consequence, were compelled to be satisfied with the various articles and program notes that could be found here and there. Mr. Gray's study is brief, but there is much in it that is of value. He begins with an excellent discussion of Finland and the salient characteristics of the Finnish people that clears up many misconceptions regarding them, and so throws light on Sibelius. Finland, it appears, is an enlightened and civilized country, despite its remoteness and smallness. Far from being the depressing wilderness inhabited by barbarous and primitive people that it is commonly supposed to be, it is instead a highly progressive and modern country. Less than 1.2 per cent. of its population is illiterate, and the "political constitution is the last word in enlightened democracy." If the Finns did succumb to the Prohibition fallacy, then that is not to be held against them, for they soon perceived the folly of such nonsense, and one now has the same freedom there in drinking as he enjoys in eating. Mr. Gray points out that the popular belief that Sibelius is of purely Finnish extraction is quite wrong; Sibelius, he shows, is actually more Swedish than Finnish. His ancestors in the main were

highly cultivated and educated people. Sibelius himself is a curious mixture of "the characteristic qualities of the two racial types; the traditional charm, affability, and *bonhomie* of the Swede, and the fiercely independent spirit, the sturdy self-reliance, the love of isolation and solitude, the extreme reserve, of the Finn. In the luxurious hotels and restaurants of Helsingfors he is the man of the world, an epicure with a refined and highly developed sense for all the graces and amenities of civilized life; in the austere and primitive surroundings of Järvenpää he is the mystic, the anchorite, the aloof and solitary dreamer."

Quite against his will, he tells us, Mr. Gray has been brought to the conviction that Sibelius "will ultimately prove to have been, not only the greatest of his generation, but one of the major figures in the entire history of music." While other modern composers who had engaged Mr. Gray's interest have ceased to hold and satisfy him, "the figure of Sibelius gradually and imperceptibly grew in stature and significance until now he overshadows them all." Mr. Gray defends his position very adroitly. His discussion of the music is necessarily brief, but it is unfailingly shrewd and revealing. Sibelius has written a formidable amount of music, but Mr. Gray has managed to cover it with commendable thoroughness, passing over the insignificant works and devoting most of his space to the important ones. His final chapter, *The Music Considered as a Whole*, is especially fine, though he permits himself several statements that most of us will find excessive, as, for example, when he says that "the symphonies of Sibelius represent the highest point attained in this form since the death of Beethoven." That is a pretty tall statement, but such lapses are not frequent and in any case do not mar the essential value of the study. Mr. Gray employs an admirably simple, direct and forceful style, as those who have read his "Survey of Contemporary Music" will testify, and the same distinction and felicity of phrase that made that book so enjoyable and provocative are to be found in equal abundance in this volume. Unfortunately, an index is lacking, but at the end there is a complete list of Sibelius' works.

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